

Only If You Knew

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Only If You Knew

by [Xetera](#)

Summary

Dream never loses if he can help it, but something about George makes him vulnerable. George has lived his life without a label until Dream makes him reevaluate everything he thought he knew.

Dream purposefully loses to George during a game of Fall Guys, setting off a long chain of events in their friendship. Spirals of feelings, realizations, and insufferable pining ensue.

Notes

[Fic Playlist](#)

Dream Knows He's Fucked

Dream looks up from his phone to where George's stream is idly playing on his computer after hearing an alert, looking to see how many gift subs he'd just received.

"Hello, Maia! Good to see you're in chat. I'm praying you didn't just see me die to a blaze with full iron, Fs in chat," George chuckles as his stream stays suspended on the death screen.

Dream looks back to his phone as George reads his many donations, saying various hellos and happy birthdays. Scrolling through twitter, he searches through his hashtag, looking for art and fan support to occupy his mind. His thumb swipes up and lands on a drawing of him wearing a dress, crying on a stage with shiny balloon letters spelling "PROM" behind him.

It's pretty good.

Rolling his eyes and laughing to himself, he moves past it after reading the description.

MaxieWasTaken

@galaxypen3924

Dream crying in a prom dress v - v,, @dreamwastaken sry abt ur breakup </3 (jk)

Maia's great; she's beautiful and talented, and Dream thinks the way this entire fiasco has become an internet phenomenon is surprisingly entertaining. Getting used to this strange internet presence has been honestly bizarre, but the most fun he's ever had.

"Ooh, gifting subs after a few minutes? You're going to make me blush," George's voice calls from his PC.

Dream moves back to his mouse and scrolls up in the chat, scanning for her name.

mxmtoon: I think you dropped these ;)

That's nice of her; George deserves all of it. Dream knows they've been talking privately recently, and it's been nice hearing George so excited.

Chewing his lip inattentively, Dream pushes off the wall and scoots his chair back, propping his feet up as he switches to Instagram, leaving the stream playing in the background.

"Alright, this seed isn't looking great. I'm done with hardcore for the day. What do we think, chat? Fall Guys? I think Sapnap and Dream are on- they might be watching, too," George says, closing Minecraft.

Teamspeak starts chiming out and Dream fumbles back to his desk, pulling his mic into place and tabbing out of twitch. He finds himself smoothing out his hair, running his fingers through what

little bangs he has absentmindedly.

“Hello? Dream?” George asks.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“You up for some Fall Guys? The seed hunting’s been bust,” George says.

Dream smiles, god can he relate. He gave up 1.16 speedrunning marathons altogether as of late.

“Let’s just storm Mojang HQ someday, dude. Someone needs to answer for the endless RNG hell,” Dream chuckles.

“Definitely. Two tickets to Stockholm, Sweden, let’s do it,” George laughs in response.

“Okay, invite me, idiot,” Dream says.

“Lemme just get Sapnap on,” George replies, clicking his tongue as he moves to invite Sapnap to the call.

“What good? We Fall Guys-ing?” Sapnap asks.

“Let’s actually make it to finals this time, guys,” Dream says.

“I will not have another one of you winning on my stream again; I am taking this game. Chat, root for me,” George says as they wait to join the game.

As they start the first map, all three of them yell over one another, gaining and losing ground throughout the race.

“God, it’s these- these *imbeciles* pushing me out of the WAY, oh my god, this is so stupid,” Sapnap screams as he gets knocked off a platform by another player.

“Stop saying it like that you can’t even speak English dude-”

“IMBECILES,” Sapnap says again with enunciation.

He barely qualifies, jumping to the finish line at the last second.

The game goes pretty well, all three of them shouting and laughing as they go through the many colorful stages. The entire team manages to make it to the team battle, each triumphing over the lack of hackers in their opposition.

“It just feels cheap if we win because there’s someone hacking,” George grumbles.

“Nah, it’s because we’re awesome,” Sapnap says.

“It was all you George, MVP. You totally carried,” Dream replies.

George laughs in response, a silly, genuine laugh that has the corners of Dream’s mouth curling up.

“Go, George! That’s my boy, go George! Push that ball, king!” Sapnap whoops.

“Alright, that’s enough, dude,” Dream says with a roll of his eyes. “We got this in the bag, though, check this out.” Dream gives the ball a final push over the edge.

“Let’s go!” George shouts as they win, “Pogs for Dream in chat!”

Dream opens Twitch back up for a second, only to see chat explode with praise. His gaze ends up darting over to George's face-cam, watching the way his eyes crinkle at the edges and he smiles with his whole face.

"We've been way too nice to each other so far. I'm waiting for the fistfight to start next stage," Sapnap jokes.

Come final round, fistfight ends up being an understatement.

"You have got to be *kidding* me, Sapnap. Get- no- get AWAY stop breaking platforms right next to me!" George yells, sounding close to smashing his keyboard.

"C'mere George! Get over here, I'm gonna- DREAM! No! I will slaughter you, kid I will not hesitate, it is on sight with- NO!" Sapnap screams, falling to the last layer.

"It's only us left, guys, I'm gonna CRUSH you both," Dream cackles.

George and Dream both push each other to the very last platforms on their level, falling to where Sapnap is running frantically, trapped in a corner.

"Dream? Dream. We can talk about this Dream. We can- *NO* !" Sapnap cries.

He slams his hand on his desk, nearly breaking his microphone as he throws his headphones onto his keyboard.

"Just you and me, George," Dreams says.

"I will actually obliterate you. Come over here; I dare you." George calls.

With only a few platforms left, they both concentrate on trying to bait the other out, moving forwards and backwards on the little space they had left.

Finally, Dream is standing on his last hexagons, nowhere left to go.

"You have to cross over here, Dream. Make the jump, Dream," George taunts.

Dream glances back to the slightly delayed image of George's face, mouth pressed in a thin line, eyes narrowed in determination. He looks at George's eyes and makes the jump.

He misses.

"You missed? You MISSED!" George shouts.

The elimination screen pops up as George gets up out of his chair and cheers so loud it's almost static, his chat is overtaken with paragraphs of emotes applauding him.

He didn't try- he just... missed.

He let himself fall.

Dream watches George stare at the camera, rosy-cheeked from yelling, mouth pulled into a huge grin.

"Get wrecked, Dream! I did it, oh my god, I won! It was all three of us in the finals, and I *won* ! I'm an absolute legend!" George says, still panting.

Still in a daze, Dream gapes, trying to utter out his congratulations.

“Good job, you really had me at the end,” Dream says, breathless.

He let himself lose.

Sapnap chimes in with his own hurrahs while Dream sits back in his chair, an odd cold tingling in his chest.

“I’m not even going to try and top that, I’m finishing on a win. This was the most intense game of Fall Guys I’ve ever played, oh my god. We’re ending it there chat, thank you so much for watching, I promise to start streaming earlier; Aussies have been getting spoiled the past few days. Alright, goodbye, everyone, see you later,” George finishes up his outro with a small wave.

After his stream has ended George lets out a small sigh, murmuring to himself in a soft voice that sounds as if no one else is meant to hear it.

“What are the odds it’s all three of us right at the end? That was awesome,” George says. His voice is far milder once he’s turned off his volume and energy. Now, he simply sounds like George.

“It’s not a matter of odds, you both just suck ass,” Sapnap replies.

“Eat shit Sapnap, you came in third,” Dream says with a laugh.

“Alright y’all, I’m heading out, I need takeout and at least a four-hour nap,” Sapnap says.

“Alright, bye, man. That game was awesome,” George replies.

“Could you stay on Discord? I need to DM you something real quick,” Dream says, getting the words out before he can stammer.

There’s a small beat of silence, and he realizes how that must sound.

“Uh, yeah, sure, I’m ordering Chick-Fil-A anyway, so I’ll be on,” Sapnap answers.

George stays silent.

“Alright, bye guys,” Dream says, leaving the call hastily. His head feels entirely out of sorts, and on top of that, he didn’t think about how that would sound to George. Not like George would say if it bothered him, anyway.

No matter how angry or scared or utterly miserable George may be at any given moment, he would always do everything in his power to look anything but. Dream could make amends later. Right now, he needed to get this off his chest.

Sapnap

Whats up

Dream

Okay I need to get this off my chest because something really weird happened and I do NOT know

how to feel about it

Sapnap

What happened??

Dream

Okay so when we were playing Fall Guys like

Sapnap

Wait just now?

Dream

I let George win at the end, not even being a sore loser but I missed the jump on purpose so I would fail

YES JUST NOW

Sapnap

Wait what's the big deal

Dream

Nick I let him win

I lost

ON PURPOSE

Sapnap

Are you sure you're not just being ridic I don't see what the problem is here

Dream

You've known me for like 8 years

Tell me a single time I've thrown a game

You know how competitive I am, even when it's not necessary. you've called me out on it before

Sapnap

I get where youre coming from but why is this so weird to the point that youre freaking out abt it?

Youve probably thrown before for the meme, why this time

| *Because this time-* |

Dream's thumb hovers over his keyboard for a few moments.

Dream

Because this time it was for George

Sapnap

Yeah and

Dream puts his monitor to sleep and throws himself onto his bed with a soft thump of the sheets. Part of him wants to be angry at Sapnap for not understanding. Dream doesn't know how to explain in a way that he would understand- he wouldn't have done that voluntarily for anyone else.

Dream doesn't lose.

Not if he can help it.

That is- until now. Until George.

Looking to the faint glow of his computer faintly illuminating the room, looking at the patterns it casts on the wall, he can't help it when his mind drifts to the image of George's face lit up as he celebrates his win.

Then, Dream knows he's fucked.

A Feeling He Can't Bring Himself to Name

Thinking about your friend constantly doesn't have to mean anything, as far as Dream is concerned.

Calls with George haven't been tense, but Dream definitely has. As far as he knows, George seems not to notice his newfound sense of constant dread, which is a plus. Sat in a voice chat with George, Bad, and Sapnap after brainstorming video ideas, things feel comfortable with the entire group together.

"I should really stick to PVP," George says with a huff. He switches to creative and starts demolishing his, frankly pathetic, stone statue of himself.

The four of them are lounging around a test world as they hang out on call together, George littering the map with random builds, Sapnap and Bad playing a mock game of tag, and Dream sitting in an AFK pond laying on his bed.

"It's beautiful, George," Bad says. "Come here, I want to smack you with a rose."

"That's a poppy, fake fan," Sapnap replies.

"Okay, a poppy, *Tex*," Bad says back.

"Tex? What, are we in the army?" Dream asks. He has an arm draped over his face, listening to the mellow game music play.

"What, I want to call you guys cool nicknames! *Without* using profanities," Bad whines.

"Like bitchboy?" George says.

"No-" Bad tries to say.

"Oh, you mean like dumbass?" Sapnap interrupts.

"Stop! I-"

"Dickhead? Motherfucker? Little pissbaby?" George and Sapnap both call out.

Bad goes silent and looks at the ground, crouching and walking away dramatically.

"Aw, Bad, it's okay, look," Sapnap says, approaching with a tulip. He places a cake on the ground next to Bad and crouches next to him.

George chuckles as Bad starts showering Sapnap with 'awws' and jumping in circles. Dream looks from where he's laying down and smiles at the three of them all laughing and running around each other. He gets up and heads to his computer, hopping out of the AFK pond.

"Oh, Clay's back," George says casually.

He's been doing that a lot lately. Dream doesn't object.

"I'm gonna grind for materials on the SMP server, I have some time before dinner," Dream says.

"Dinner? Imagine eating three meals a day," Sapnap jokes.

“That’s assuming I had breakfast and lunch,” Dream responds with a laugh.

He logs off and hops on his SMP with George following.

“Wow okay, I see how it is. We’re fine on our own, right Sappy?” Bad asks.

“Yeah, we can practice PVP without those two morons,” Sapnap replies.

“Whatever, you’re both jealous,” George says.

Dream fights a smirk and leads him to the mine, maxed out netherite picks in hand. They work as a unit, clearing swaths of stone with efficiency and gathering piles of iron and diamonds. The noises of Sapnap and Bad’s ax swings are a far-off sound while George hums to himself idly. Dream almost forgets what he’s doing as he listens to the soft notes under George’s breath, his brain working to decipher the melody.

“Can I have some steak?” George says. Dream is snapped back to reality quickly.

He drops a half a stack of cooked steak and returns to mining to busy his mind.

“Thanks, Dream. Love you,” George says.

The sound of axes swinging pauses entirely. Dream almost checks to see if the two are still in the TeamSpeak call.

“ *What?* ” Bad asks and gasps aloud.

Oh.

“Oh my god, he says he loves Dream all the time off-stream, you just haven’t been on call when it’s happened. It’s honestly a little annoying, George doesn’t say he loves me nearly as much,” Sapnap pouts.

“Maybe I don’t love you as much as I love Dream,” George says back. His voice is taunting and over-the-top, but Dream laughs anyway.

“Oh my god wh- Guys! I am on the floor right now, how have I never heard this before?” Bad asks.

George brushes it off and changes the subject, putting all his ore to smelt. Dream knows that silence, the same silence when a donation rolls in asking about Dream, or when his chat spams him with hearts for Dream. His silence feels heavy and stifled, like he was caught dancing by himself and the music abruptly stopped. It’s not Bad’s fault- there’s nothing he loves more than seeing his friends show affection, especially in their case where they so stubbornly avoid it.

He and Dream leave the mine with their spoils and make towards the outer bounds of the city. Flint and steels in hand, the two of them wander the expanse of the plains to restock their food reserves. They both grind for cooked meat for a few minutes before George stops in his tracks, and Dream can hear a hushed giggle from his end of the call.

“George?” he asks.

“Oh sorry, yeah,” George responds, coming back.

He continues for a few more seconds before pausing again, and Dream can barely hear the quiet pinging of his phone notifications.

“You still there?” Dream asks.

“Yeah, sorry,” George answers again.

“You sure, dude?”

Dream listens closer and hears the tapping of George’s phone keyboard, then his phone being put on his desk.

“Hah, yeah, Maia’s just texting me, sorry,” George says. He takes his sword in hand again and catches up to Dream ahead of him.

That’s annoying.

Dream doesn’t speak for a while. Later on, he can see George pause for a few seconds every now and then, and it takes a herculean effort not to say something. Surely he knows he’s being kind of rude, right?

“What’re you guys talking about?” Dream asks.

“Nothing, just joking around,” George says. “Let’s go, come on.”

His mind refuses to shut up, constructing different possible conversations. After a few minutes, Dream can’t stop himself from pressing further.

“What’s Maia up to?” he asks.

“Not much. She’s planning to go on holiday around Europe, I think. She was supposed to tour a concert there but it got canceled,” George says.

God, what Dream would give to drop everything and go vacationing out of the states. Florida is a stressful area to be in during lockdown, and he’d give anything to be bathing under the European sun right now.

“So... is she visiting the UK?” Dream asks.

“Hah, yeah, she has a few stops in England. She keeps sending me pictures of swim trunks and asking which one I’d wear to Brighton beach,” George says with a chuckle.

“You actually gonna meet?” Dream asks. He curses himself for the small voice crack.

“We’re just joking, Dream. It’d be fun but that’s probably not the best idea with a pandemic around. Maybe if the world weren’t fucked right now. God, if only,” George says. His sigh makes him sound genuinely disappointed, and Dream feels a twinge of guilt at the bottom of his stomach.

Dream decides to stay quiet after that. His mind's eye conjures George in patterned swim trunks wading in the oncoming tides, skipping pebbles on the water. His heart drops as he can't shake the image of Maia next to him, giving him a feeling he can't bring himself to name.

A Step for George is More Than Enough

George wakes up to the sound of his alarm blaring on his bedside table and groggily sits up with an eye rub. He fumbles for his phone to turn off the damn thing and check the time.

Saturday

3:00 PM

(10:00 AM EDT)

He doesn't know why he bothers setting an alarm at such an ungodly hour, but he figures he would have stayed in bed this late regardless. Dream has been on a 'waking up early' kick, so the stubborn idiot is probably awake by now. George stays in bed for a few more minutes, scrolling through twitter as he gives his brain time to adjust to consciousness.

After half an hour of lazing around and perusing fanart, he manages to roll out of bed and stretch his arms out with a full-body yawn. George roots around through his laundry for a pair of sweatpants and a shirt that smell wearable, also settling for one of his merch hoodies.

In the bathroom, he brushes his teeth while looking through fanart on his timeline. He likes a couple of tweets from friends, runs his fingers through his hair in the mirror, and looks curiously at the face looking back at him before going back to his room.

Settling into his gaming chair, George looks for something to busy himself with. His routine usually involves editing, but the only video he has lined up is the meetup vlog-

George looks through his coding projects folder, trying to find a plugin to work on. Not finding anything on that front, he considers recording a video. The only videos he had scheduled were pushed back since Dream couldn't-

He leans back in his chair. The sound of his phone notification goes off, and he picks it up and sees a twitter DM notice.

sapnap2

@twsimnap

< this could be us but you playin

Attached is an image of a man and woman dressed in diamond armor costumes, which gives George a good laugh.

I'll wear the short skirt if you wield the sword 🗡️ >

< no cap? 🤖

All you gotta do is say the word <3 >

< the word

George rolls his eyes.

Dumbass >

< thanks I try

Are we recording anything today? >

< dream hasn't been available for like 10 years, probably not

Alright then I guess I have a free day might stream later or smth >

You should play on the SMP with me I'm lonely >



< ok

< as long as you never make that face again

No promises >

He looks through the rest of his social media when he gets another DM.

< why you lonely tho bby

< is your minecraft boyfriend not giving you attention :,(

George winces.

Lol you joke, but >

Hah idk I've just been in a mood I guess >

< damn then, your real boyfriend not giving you attention?

Y o u j o k e b u t >

< 🤔

Lmao just saying you wouldn't know if I had a boyfriend or not >

< uhh I think Id know

< since first off youre straight lol

Hm >

< whats hm???

I guess you wouldn't know that either >

< ????

< i mean youve said youre straight

Well everyone starts off assuming theyre straight >

But who actually knows for sure though >

< George

< I know for sure

< Most straight people know for sure

Okay I highly doubt that >

How do you know one day you wont just be like >

Mmmm dudes >

You know? >

< ...

< I really dont

George panics for a second, trying to find a way to play off his past ten messages. Dropping a 'jk' and turning off his phone is always an option, right?

< do you even know?

He chews on his nail as he looks for an answer. Does he even know?

Well, of course, everyone thinks that there's a possibility they're not entirely straight. Of course, everybody entertains that idea and wonders if those feelings they recognized might ever develop into something past the point of dismissal. Everyone does.

Is it too late to drop a jk and move on >

< no now im curious

< do you think that like

< everyone just goes around thinking they might wake up one day and like dick

Okay thats a bit much uh >

< im not the person to ask about this but I really don't think it works like that dude

Well I dont know about these things either okay >

I just thought that >

God Im really digging myself a hole here, huh >

< youre not digging anything man

< except dudes

< maybe

SAPNAP >

< just KIDDING

< haha unless?

Dude >

Just >

I dont know >

Sapnap's end shows up as typing and not typing for a few seconds before he responds.

< you dont have to know

< im not really the leading expert here

< and im not going to know the right things to say

< but im here anyways

George thinks, really thinks. He's lived life without a label because it was always assumed and he never asked questions. Most people accept what's imprinted and move on, and he figured only the people that were sure and confident stood up and challenged that. George has never challenged liking women, so he's never challenged that assumption.

But men? Yeah, it would be easy to say he's never thought of it. He's never pictured crossing the aisle hand in hand with a man, of course, but if he's being honest with himself, that isn't the whole truth.

Even if he isn't the leading expert on all things LGBT+, he knows that it isn't black and white; there are all numbers of things you can be. Some mechanism in the back of his mind is still whispering to him, though, 'if you like girls, you're straight' no matter how much he learns and is exposed to. Some mechanism in his brain makes his stomach feel queasy at the notion of stepping outside that boundary, of exploring anything outside what he's been told he should be.

So George thinks. George thinks, and the answer is met with full-body aversion and a cold, empty feeling of irrational terror. He's scared of the answer, and yet he musters up all of his courage and says it anyway.

I'm bisexual >

He sits staring at the screen, nausea settling in his gut as he sees the read receipt. Sapnap spends what feels like an eternity typing, and every bad possible scenario is sent rushing through his head. He tries to blink rogue tears out of his eyes, cursing his body for betraying him.

< pog

George does a double take, and immediately bursts out laughing. He can't help but throw his head back, wiping the tears from his eyes and pinching the bridge of his nose for dear life. He shouldn't have expected any different.

By the time he looks back to his phone he sees a new message.

< thank god I still have your address

Underneath is a screenshot of a Postmates order confirmation to his house.

< have some Mickey Ds bby I know your crusty ass hasnt eaten yet

And with that, George finds himself on the verge of tears again.

< oh yeah and dont expose that I was nice to you we have a rivalry to maintain

I won't tell >

Idiot >

< <3

George lets out a sigh, a weight off his shoulders that had been there so long he had simply forgotten. He makes a mental note to give Sapnap the biggest hug when he finally sees him in person.

< how bout we play some bedwars today, just us

< we can stream later but lets just hang out n chill

That sounds great >

His food arrives once they're well into their first game, already having defeated two teams and making their way across the map.

"Dude, come to blue, they're both low!" Sapnap calls in VC.

"Hold on I think that was my door, I'll be back," George says. As he takes off his headset he can hear Sapnap's shouting fade into quiet.

When George comes back, he sees that Sapnap has built a small hut around him out of wool, and he chuckles and he breaks his way out. He looks through the bag and is met with a sight that makes his mouth water.

"Oh my god yes I have been craving nuggets, thank you so much. I can't even describe the joy in my heart right now," George says.

"No problem baby," Sapnap responds.

He goes quiet for a few seconds.

"Can... can I still call you baby? As a joke? Or is that too-"

"God, Sapnap it's fine. Nothing's changed, don't worry," George answers.

"Okay, good just making sure," Sapnap says with a nervous laugh. "Can I still call Dream your minecraft boyfriend?"

George's face falls.

"I'm sorry did I-"

"No, seriously it's fine I'd just... it's fine," George says.

A pit forms in his throat, and he tries to swallow and move on.

“Do you wanna talk about it?” Sapnap asks.

“Nothing to talk about,” George responds flatly.

“Alright. Cool,” Sapnap says.

The two of them kill the only opposing team, and start on destroying their bed with ease. When the green text appears, George is filled with that rush of pride and accomplishment he always gets from a win, Sapnap cheering by his side.

Once they’ve gone back to the lobby, Sapnap clears his throat aloud to speak.

“You know that... You can talk to me about anything. I don’t do shit like this all that great but I’m always here. Maybe I can’t help you with your identity and stuff but whatever you’re feeling I’ve got you. Always,” Sapnap says.

George chews on a fingernail.

“Thank you. I don’t deserve you man,” he says.

“By the way, I mean if you’re looking for someone in the LGBT+ circles, Eret is really cool and might be able to help with that kind of thing. I haven’t talked to him one-on-one much, but he seems like a good person to go to,” Sapnap adds.

That’s actually not a bad idea. He knows the guy is a huge activist and proudly bi himself, maybe he has some advice.

“I’ll definitely consider that. Thanks,” George says.

The rest of his day continues as normal as if he didn’t just admit something huge to his friend, and himself. As they move to a stream, the back of George’s mind keeps straying to the foreign feeling in his chest that sticks with him the rest of the night.

Maybe he’s still partly panicking inside at the thought of straying from what’s been imprinted upon him since birth, and being honest with himself in a way he’s never had to before. Maybe even telling one person, a friend who he trusts, is already too much for him. Maybe it will take time before he can be ready for anything else. But, he took a baby step. And a step for George is more than enough.

It Gets Worse Before it Gets Better

Come the next few days, the rising humid heat and flood of children eating ice cream cones on their porches declares this year the hottest summer in England. He's enjoyed spending the season with his friends as best he can, streaming Fall Guys and Among Us late at night.

However, the Dream SMP server has been empty as of late, save for the occasional Tommy and Tubbo shenanigans. With the year feeling like an endless nightmare and in-person interaction severely lacking, Sapnap texted everyone on the server's whitelist with a plan.

Sapnap

Hey loser, I have an idea for something crazy to do on the SMP. Hear me out: HUGE SUMMER VACATION

With that, George is already on board.

In the following week, everyone and their mother who'd ever played on the server was invited far across the map, thousands of blocks away from the main city to a large beach biome off the coast of a sunflower plains- the vacation spot that dreams are made of. So that's how nearly twenty minecraft players ended up on one beach, all on one Teamspeak call having the virtual summer trip of a lifetime.

By the time they had all gotten there, Sapnap had already scouted ahead and built a resort- and he's proven to be a better builder than anyone gives him credit for. The build is two floors of lamp-lit quartz rooms complete with a master suite and an on-site jacuzzi in the back garden. Sapnap and George took the suite of course, rooming together with a bed saved for Dream.

"Has anyone talked to Dream recently? He said he'd be on for this, and it's already been almost half an hour," Sapnap said while he muted himself from his stream. George loves the guy, but he's not very good at masking his emotions, and in this case, the whole call goes quiet at the sound of his disappointment.

"He's probably just late, he'll be on," George assures him. Dream wouldn't miss something, especially something important to a friend.

"The green bastard can't be bothered to show up to an event on his own server, Jesus what an ass," Tommy says.

"You're just mad you won't be able to put him in your thumbnail, Tomathy," Wilbur teases.

"Piss off Wilbur, you asked twenty times if Techno would be showing up, don't call me a clout chaser," Tommy says back.

"Okay, but Techno actually likes me," Wilbur says.

"Dream likes us!" Tubbo pouts.

"Stop saying 'us' Tubbo, Dream likes *me*, don't put words in my mouth," Tommy says.

“Wait about five seconds, his chat will be filled with the word ‘toxic.’” Quackity laughs.

“Oh, the Tubbo cult, you’re great. Love watching Tommy get bullied on his own stream,” Punz says.

<Callahan> What’s first on the agenda?

“What’s a genda’?” Eret jokes, the crew erupting in laughs.

“I vote building sandcastles!” Bad says.

“No, last time you built me a sandcastle it was trash. Heads up for everyone: do not go on a date with Bad. Not worth it,” Skeppy says.

“Skeppy! Do you know how that sounds without context? Stop it!” Bad responds.

“Ladies, ladies, be civil. Skeppy, no blowing things up. Bad, no being boring on dates,” Sapnap says.

“Oh my goodness, we didn’t actually-”

“Thin ice, Bad,” Sapnap says. “Anyways, gather around everyone. You have all been summoned to this server for the greatest summer vacation of your LIVES. Tonight, we’ll kick it off with a huge bonfire party in the back gardens, I’ve already set up the buffet, and we’ll have voice chat karaoke and a dance floor. Strap in, guys, because we are partying all week long and ending the summer with a bang. Y’all ready for the best party this SMP has ever seen?!”

Everyone shouts back, jumping and punching the air around him. George is impressed; Sapnap really came through, and he’s excited to get a moment of fun with everyone amidst the chaos of real life. As everyone is celebrating and touring the resort, George sees Dream join the call.

“Hey what’s up everyone,” he says.

“Just starting, Dream, I can tp you,” Sapnap replies.

George listens to Sapnap give the rundown while he explores the garden with Callahan and Alyssa. Wilbur runs towards the plains and comes back bearing a sunflower for Nikki. The campfire pit is surrounded by log seats and custom trees, and George feels a sense of pride that his friend did all of this. He follows Tommy and Tubbo to the jacuzzi and looks over the edge, getting punched in by Purpled.

“Woah, I don’t think people would like me being in a jacuzzi with a bunch of sixteen year olds,” George chuckles.

“TOS, guys? TOS? Wait, get out, I think George shat the pool,” Tommy says, punching Tubbo out of the water.

“You’re an idiot,” George says.

He leaves to look at the main resort building, an impressive white and gold building overlooking the sun dipping into the ocean on the horizon.

George finally decides to check out the master suite, and Sapnap walks in behind him.

“Do you like it?” Sapnap asks.

“It’s... interesting,” George replies.

The room is lined wall to wall with heart banners and redstone lamps, the floor carpeted in pink wool. George crouches and looks around, taking it all in.

“Good, 'cause this is home for the next week,” Sapnap teases.

“So which bed am I taking?” Dream asks, entering the room.

Sapnap starts, “I was gonna take middle-”

“Nope, I’m taking the middle. Move over,” Dream says. He punches Sapnap away and gets in the middle bed, setting his spawn.

“Okay, damn. I’m gonna start setting up in the back, get settled in,” Sapnap says.

After he closes the door behind him, George looks to both beds beside Dream and sighs to himself. No point in stalling.

He hops into the bed on the right, setting his spawn. The moment he’s laying down, Dream leaves the bed and ushers out of the room, George watching him with Optifine zoom as he sprints away.

Weird.

George walks out into the garden and sees the build as it's supposed to be seen- sunset barely peeking over the ocean, the campfire casting light on the surrounding trees as all of his friends sit around and laugh, eating baked potatoes and pumpkin pies by the greenery. A nearby group of bees make their way back towards their hive, covered in pollen and done for the evening.

He sidles up to a ‘buffet table’ and grabs a few baked potatoes, taking his place on a log bench.

"So, anyone takers for first song? Try to keep it family-friendly, some of us are trying to stay monetized," Sapnap says.

"I'll do WAP!" George shouts.

"Very funny, *Georgie* . Any volunteers?"

"Can you pull up a karaoke track of Feelings are Fatal?" Eret asks.

"Shore thang," Sapnap says, queuing it up.

The group starts hooting and hollering obnoxiously as the instrumental starts and Eret steps up on top of a table. George, mid-laugh, spots Dream sitting quietly across from him.

I'm happy for you

I'm smilin' for you

I'd do anything

For you, for you

It's always for you

Dream gets up and moves to the jacuzzi without a word. George stares into the fire lost in thought.

I'm always sad

And I'm always lonely

But I can't tell you

That I'm breaking slowly

The outline of Dream against the starless night fills George with a sense of pity, and something he can only describe as longing.

Keepin' my feelings hidden

There is no ease

I need it to stop

And I want to be able

To open up but

My feelings are fatal

My feelings are fatal

George waits for the song to finish and give a round of applause before going to join Dream. He stands by the edge next to him, the next song starting. George leaves the main Teamspeak group and invites him over to their own call.

"Whatcha doin, Clay?"

He doesn't respond.

"This build is really cool. Sappnap did good," George continues.

"Yeah," Dream responds flatly.

Alright then.

"Excited to room together?" George asks with a giggle.

Dream doesn't say anything for a few moments.

"What do you want?" He asks.

"To talk? What do you mean?" George asks back.

"Aren't you recording?" Dream asks.

"Well, yeah," George replies.

"Not much content here," Dream says.

"Maybe I just want to talk to you?" George says.

"You don't."

What? Is George missing something?

"Do you not want to talk or something?" George asks. His eyebrows furrow and he chews his lip in disappointment.

"I have nothing to say. If you're looking for something clip-worthy you're not gonna find it here," Dream says.

There's no noise save for the static of the call. George considers how to respond, frustrated with Dream's apathetic act.

"What's your deal? You've been acting up all week," he says.

"Whatever," Dream replies.

"Whatever? *Whatever* ? What's your problem?" George asks, trying to keep his temper in check.

"You seem to be the only one who has a problem," Dream answers nonchalantly.

"Are you serious? You've been distant, careless, and a huge dick all week. Are you kidding me?" George says, raising his voice.

"I'm not the one who's escalating," Dream shrugs.

"I'M NOT ESCALATING SHIT."

"Do you hear yourself speak? I'm genuinely curious," Dream asks with an audible smirk.

George chews on the inside of his cheek, trying to quell the part of him that is screaming to push even further, to keep pushing until Dream snaps.

Taking deep breaths, George decides to drop it. Dream must be going through something.

He's not thinking clearly, he's trying to provoke him, and George won't give in.

His friend needs support, not someone to indulge in his conflict-seeking behavior.

"Yeah. Figures," Dream starts. "Don't make your workload harder by adding more footage to edit out of you throwing temper tantrums. Gotta keep things light for those ten minute gay highlights, right *baby* ?"

That's. It.

George gets an axe in hand, absolutely fuming. He swings quickly and in a frenzy, crushing Dream in a matter of seconds.

Dream was slain by GeorgeNotFound

"Fuck. Off," George says through his teeth.

"Alright then, later. Tell Sapnap I had a *blast* ," Dream replies.

Dream left the game

"User disconnected from your channel ."

George sits alone in the voice call, gut feeling empty.

"Shit," he mutters under his breath.

He joins the main call again, hoping no one notices. When the sound comes in there's a flood of whooping and music at full volume, and George is in the clear.

"Thank you for the touching rendition of Le Festin from the award winning animated picture, Ratatouille. I wish I were kidding when I say that performance will stick in my memory for a very long time," Sapnap says in a laughing fit.

"I call next song! Toxic by Britney Spears!" Skeppy yells.

"...Alright, Toxic by Britney Spears for Skeppy then," Sapnap says.

Skeppy takes to the colored glass dance floor, dancing the best he can with Minecraft controls. George tries to join in the fun, but he can't bring himself to muster up the energy. The next twenty minutes pass by in a blur, the sounds melting together into white noise.

"Hey George, you haven't gone up yet. You chickening out on me?" Sapnap asks.

George looks up to Sapnap. Has he been staring at a grass block for the past five songs? That's going to be a bitch to edit, not to mention a huge loss of footage.

"I don't have a song in mind," George says.

"Hm, how about... Sweater Weather? By The Neighborhood?" Sapnap says with a chuckle.

"Hah, I don't know it. I don't think it's sweater weather yet," George says under his breath.

Sapnap gives a knowing nod.

"Ah. Any requests, then?"

Well.

"I blame dream team Twitter for this, but I've had Heather stuck in my head for days," George says.

"Alright then," Sapnap says.

As the music starts to swell, George starts to sing along like it's instinct.

I still remember third of December

Me in your sweater, you said it looked better

On me, than it did you, only if you knew

How much I liked you, but I watch your eyes

As she walks by

What a sight for sore eyes

Brighter than a blue sky

She's got you mesmerized

While I die

During the beat before the next line, George feels his heart sink leagues beneath his chest. Out of nowhere, his face goes flush and his eyes go glassy with tears.

"Why would you ever kiss me?

I'm not even half as pretty.

You gave her your sweater.

It's just polyester.

But you like her better.

I wish I were Heather."

The rest of the song he sings on autopilot, words spilling out beyond his control. The lyrics linger in his mind and he sings the notes, desperate to get them out.

Even after the song is finished and his friends are applauding him, the feeling doesn't leave. Sapnap starts to wrap up the first night with a church prime prayer under the moon, and George pushes himself to stay until the last person has left the call, until he can finally stop filming.

At this point, it's just George and Sapnap left sitting on the server.

"I was a little afraid this wouldn't be what I hoped but I'm actually excited for the next few days," Sapnap hums. "I wish Dream would have been... y'know."

"Present?" George offers.

"Hah, well I wasn't going to say it like that. He probably has other stuff going on, not his fault," Sapnap replies. His voice sounds more bothered than his words let on.

"Why wouldn't you say it like that? There's no other way to say it. He's being an insensitive prick," George snaps.

"It's not that serious," Sapnap says.

Yeah, because you aren't getting your heart shit on.

George swallows.

The thought is so loud in his head, he almost believes Sapnap could hear it.

He sits waiting for Sapnap to speak again, to say anything that George can lash out at to get this cold emptiness out of his chest.

"I'm sorry, George, if I'm being too much with the bi jokes and everything. I don't know how to approach this except with... well, how I usually roll. I know you're not ready, and I shouldn't be pushing. It's not my place" Sapnap says all in one breath. He audibly sits back in his chair and waits for a moment. "If you're hurting I just want to be here for you."

The lack of any ill will is a slap to the face.

Why couldn't it have been him? Why did it have to be Dream? Sapnap is easy to talk to. Sapnap can turn on the psychotic laughter and the fighting on camera, and drop the act the moment George needs him. They haven't known each other as long as other people they play with, but Sapnap has been nothing but a good friend, no matter the rival act they play. Sapnap listens, and sometimes says the wrong thing but always sends the right message.

But George doesn't *need* him. He doesn't light up with a smile the moment he hears his voice. He doesn't sit waiting for the next moment he can play with him. He doesn't rewatch his streams late at night to fall asleep to the sound of him talking. He doesn't have a closeup picture of his eye screenshotted off his twitter. He doesn't refresh twitter again and again to see if he's on his Minecraft Championship team. He doesn't sit in the shower brainstorming video ideas to impress him with.

Up until now, it hadn't even hit him that he had done all those things for Dream. That he thinks about Dream. That he *needs* Dream.

"Sapnap?"

"Yeah?"

"Can you... can you tell me I'm not trapped? Tell me that I'm going to be okay?" George asks. He feels silly after it comes out of his mouth.

"Hey. *Hey*. Listen to me, you dumb Brit. You are NOT trapped. Everything IS going to be okay. Those aren't just words. That's a promise. A pinky promise," Sapnap says.

"We can't even cross pinkies, we're literally in different continents," George says.

"Well then I guess you owe me one. But it's true. Don't let your brain worms convince you otherwise," Sapnap says.

"Thank you. Really," George says.

"Just doin' mah job Geoh-gie," Sapnap says with a crude English accent.

"I guess It's time to turn in already," George yawns.

"It's the middle of the night over there, get some sleep you degenerate," Sapnap chuckles.

"Goodnight."

"Night."

George goes through his nightly routine of turning off his setup and cleaning the day's snacks off his desk. After he tosses himself onto his mattress, he picks up his phone and holds his breath as he

sees a Discord notification from Dream.

Dream

what did you tell sap

Doesn't get more vague and unclear than that. He deliberates over how to respond for a while, and settles for being honest.

George

Are we fighting? Is that what this is?

Dream

Do we "fight"?

George

I guess

Dream

Alright then. We're fighting.

Just don't involve Sapnap

Not his business

I don't need him on my case messaging me about this shit

George

We're a team, our business is his business

Dream

We're a "team" to twitter stans and youtube fanatics. We're just people. Don't be dramatic.

George

I'm not going to be anything to you until you get your shit together and stop taking out whatever you're going through on me.

George doesn't want to leave it there. He doesn't know what else to do. He feels-

Trapped.

I guess we're fighting.

A sigh escapes his lips and he decides to turn off all Dream's message notifications for the night. George has to manually change his app settings, getting flustered when he remembers setting Dream to priority. Dream is always priority.

While adjusting his Twitter DMs, he scrolls past a tweet from Eret on his timeline. Huh.

It's only a stream announcement from the day's event, but George curiously taps on Eret's profile. He had texted Eret briefly after Sapnap suggested it, but nothing that went beyond a simple coming out and polite conversation. He had played hours worth of Minecraft with the guy, be it during the championships or the SMP, but sharing his personal emotions was a whole other ball game.

Still, he's acquainted with him well enough to take a chance, and right now, that's all he needs.

Eret

@The_Eret

Hey Eret, are you awake? >

< Always dude

I need help with something >

< Sure! Whats up?

George stares at the bright screen, black line in the text box blinking black at him expectantly.

How do you >

How >

How can you say out loud that you're not something you've always assumed you are? It's like everything in my mind is blaring red alarms >

How do you be honest with other people when your own heart is telling you your life will be over >

I see people being prideful everywhere I look, so open and upfront and unafraid and I keep thinking to myself I'll never get there >

< You've already come so far George, don't expect years of psychological programming to suddenly go away. There's no magic solution, it's not easy for anyone. Even if you are surrounded by people who will accept you unconditionally.

< It gets worse before it gets better. But I promise it gets better.

I really needed to hear that >

You're a good dude, do you know that >

< Thanks, no problem

< There's a lot of things I wish someone had said to me when I was struggling, so I do everything to help those I can

Making a mental reminder to play with you more >

The MCC excitement is unreal >

< Yes!

< We Brits stick together 😊

For queen, country, and unlearning internalized biphobia >

<

🚩

George exhales and put his earphones in, sinking down into his pillow. Hitting shuffle, he lets the music drown out the buzzing of his thoughts.

The generic lo-fi plays on full volume until his brain tires of overthinking enough to fall asleep.

Brighton Beach it Is

It was becoming increasingly hard for Dream not to feel like the biggest asshole on planet Earth. If he was being honest, though, that wasn't far off.

Following their fight, Dream being reluctant to call it that much, he couldn't speak without having a creeping feeling like everyone knew. He felt everyone's ears on him like he was the elephant in the room, as ridiculous as that may seem. Dream's lizard brain didn't get the memo that everyone was, in fact, not angry at him. That didn't stop him from being overwhelmed with guilt around his close friends.

That night, he had even *dreamed* about George. The feeling of George cradling his head with soft praise was so real, he was left with a sense of emptiness after waking.

Dream laid in bed for hours, chasing that peaceful trance; he felt an unrivaled sense of tranquility and home listening to George hum the notes of a song, Dream filling in the words. It felt complete.

In the morning, he feels hollow.

Once he manages to pry his eyes open, he looks through his youtube front page, searching for some content to numb his mind.

Minecraft But I'm Not Colorblind Anymore...

GeorgeNotFound • 1M views • 6 hours ago

The enchroma glasses.

Dream gives a small huff, seeing that it was finally posted. Against his better judgment, he decides to watch it for no other reason than curiosity.

He immediately regrets his decision as it starts.

"I'll be the first thing you see," Dream says in the video. He cringes at his own words, the blatant adoration in his voice.

George's face lights up the moment he slips the glasses onto his nose, eyes darting around in wonder.

"Wait, no way!" George says in a smile.

Dream pauses the video, eyes fixed on George's smile. He chews on a fingernail, trying not to laugh at the irony of looking through rose-colored glasses.

"You're actually *green*," George says.

"I am, I am," Dream says.

The pain in the deepest part of his chest is dull and crushing.

“Ha- you’re so cute- heheh,” Dream chuckles. He wonders if George heard that, really, truly understood him.

Dream has to stop the video, he can’t take it.

Even after the video is paused, the sound of George’s laughter is still ringing in his ears, his eyes are still looking back at him through the screen, beaming with awe.

Dream throws his phone against his wall as hard as he can, flinching at the loud thud. He knows he’s going to regret that later.

Currently, he’s on the SMP with the gang, waiting for Sapnap to announce the next event so he doesn’t have to sit awkwardly any longer.

“Before this meeting, I had each of you turn in all your stuff, and I hid *one hundred* chests around this area with named items. Today, I will give each of you a list of every item, and it is your job to find as many of them as possible before the next in-game sunset. So, you have approximately twenty minutes, and all your items must be in your designated chest before the time runs out- but here’s the catch,” Sapnap says with a smirk.

He places a pile of chests with a hopper feeding into them and slowly drops everyone’s stuff into it in front of them. As everyone in the call groans and complains, Sapnap makes a bigger show of it, teasing all of them with their precious netherite gear.

“Now, I will inform all of you; nothing is off-limits... if you can get away with it. You may get your items back, you may team, you may kill, you may cheat- as long as I don’t witness you. If I see you teaming with, trading with, or killing another player, or even holding any of your gear, you are disqualified. I will be in F1 mode so I can’t see kills in chat, and there is a strict no-snitching policy because lets be honest here, I would be an idiot to believe any of you on your word,” he says.

Sapnap walks to each player, handing them a book and quill.

“Lastly, I will be walking around during the scavenger hunt, and, if any of you thought you were sneaky, I’ll be hopping into random voice channels to check up on each of you,” Sapnap adds.

“Can you hop into my voice channel? Just the two of us? Promise I won’t tell,” George says, walking towards him in a crouch.

“You’re very cute, George, but sadly, you’re all on your own. Now, you’re probably all curious what the prize is for this game, so I’ll tell you. Tomorrow, I am hosting a game of capture the flag. Whoever is victorious today will start capture the flag with 5 items of their choosing, and I mean it when I say *any* item. That caught your attention? A’ight, I’m sure you’re all sick of me talking so let’s go ahead and start the clock. Good luck, y’all,” he says.

Everyone immediately goes into a furor, running in every direction and naturally settling into their own voice channels.

For the first time, Dream feels like he doesn’t belong in any group. He’s always been the glue in friendships, he’s always been able to put himself in any circle and already fit in; hell, everyone’s here because of him, it’s his own server. But now, he stands alone, looking at the different cliques, and his own closest friends, feeling helpless. Realistically, he knows he would be welcome anywhere, but he can’t stomach the thought of talking to anyone right now.

Stick to the game, find all the chests, kill if you can.

The moment Sapnap leaves the mini cornucopia Dream goes for his stuff. He rummages through until he finds his gear, grabbing a few others' weapons for good measure.

"User joined your channel."

Dream's breath hitches.

"What's up D-money?!"

He lets out a breath, relieved. It's just Tommy "Bitchboy" Innit.

"What do you want, Tommy?" Dream sighs.

"Listen, alright. So you're the best speedrunner, I'm devilishly good-looking, we should've been on a team the moment the clock started, right? I say we kill everyone, get all the discs, split it 60/40, you come in second, obviously, because let's be honest; you don't need the ego boost. What do you say?"

"Thanks for checking in Tommy," Dream says.

"Wait, no, Big D, don't-"

Ah. Sweet silence.

Being alone actually sounds like a good option now.

Dream manages to get a good number of items just by finding chests, crossing off a good fifteen from his list. He should have a considerable lead, for someone who's just scavenging.

"Dream?" Wilbur's voice chimes in.

"Yes?" Dream asks.

"So, we are both leaders of our respective nations-"

"You're the president of a hotdog shack and like, two trees," Dream interrupts.

"There are actually at least five trees in L'manberg, thank you very much. Anyways, we both understand responsibility, and more importantly, power. I think the two of us combined, our influence would be enough to win us this game. You're a reasonable man, how about we go for a tie? I'm sure Sapnap would be magnanimous in such an unprecedented situation as a tie," Wilbur says.

"Are we talking about the same Sapnap? I'm surprised he hasn't gone into creative mode and declared himself the winner yet," Dream says.

"... You make a valid point. You wouldn't be willing to settle for second place and a lovely Chick-Fil-A dinner, would you?" Wilbur asks.

"Hard pass. I might take you up on that date, though," Dream jokes.

"Oh, a second date? You know what they say ab-"

"Goodbye Wilbur," Dream laughs.

He takes stock of the items he has, dissatisfied with his current standings. No way of knowing

everyone else's progress, Dream decides his only option is to utterly slaughter the competition.

Right as he's looking through the list, he hears a group join his channel, and sees an ambush approaching from the corner of his eye.

"GET HIS ASS!" Quackity yells. He's followed by Fundy, Jack, and Karl, who each have a few pieces of mismatched armor and sparse weapons.

"Quackity, you can't curse on my channel," Dream says.

"Oh sorry- PINCHE GUEY TE VOY A MATAR!" Quackity yells back.

"I think he said he's going to kill you," Karl says.

"Yeah, I got that from context," Dream says. As they rush him, he suits up with full netherite and gets his axe in hand.

"Um. Guys," Fundy says.

They all stop and stare blankly at Dream.

"Hey, Dream? Remember that funny bit where we were joking about killing you?" Jack Manifold asks.

"Oh, that really funny bit where I proceeded to one v. four all of you and made you look like idiots?" Dream asks.

The four of them back up slowly, looking between each other.

"Yeah, um... RUN,"

Dream hits the ground running, singling out Quackity first. He lands a few hits before the others notice and try to circle back to his rescue.

The other three try to punch him away, but Dream throws an ender pearl behind Quackity and finishes him off before he can turn around.

"This was a mistake, move out guys! Remember me!" Quackity shouts dramatically.

"We can still leave with our dignity," Fundy says.

"Hm, I'd prefer if you left with nothing," Dream says. He eats a golden apple and goes for Fundy, tanking the hits from Jack and Karl. Fundy screams into his microphone as he dies, Jack and Karl bailing at the drop of a hat.

"C'mere Jack Manifold, c'mere Karl," Dream calls out in a sing-song voice.

"I did NOT sign up to be in a manhunt!" Karl yells.

Dream gives a sinister laugh as he places water between them, forcing Jack and Karl to split up. As he spots Karl fumbling he goes in for the kill, getting crit after crit. Dream picks up his items and looks for anything useful.

A slowness potion? Perfect.

Jack tries to run, and Dream chases him down long enough to make him think he has a chance at

survival. Starting to cheer preemptively, Jack turns around, thinking he might escape. His mistake.

He throws the slowness potion and waits excitedly for Jack's reaction.

"OH MY GOD, PLEASE DREAM! PLEASE!" Jack pleads. He tries running, but Dream catches up to him in a matter of seconds. He can't help but smile as Jack screams.

Thunder1408 was slain by Dream

What satisfaction.

"... Boys," Quackity says.

"Yeah," Karl says.

The three of them leave the channel in shame, Dream looking through his spoils feeling very pleased. That's eight more off his list, and some armor to boot. His inventory is looking a little too packed, however, so Dream decides to bank the items he scavenged and double back to the cornucopia.

Returning to the middle, he stands over the chests, making sure not to have any visible weaponry in case Sapnap comes around. He puts away some extra armor and crouches behind a chest, waiting for someone to approach.

Someone walks towards him, and Dream zooms in to read the approaching nametag.

"I know you're back there, Dream," George says, now in his channel.

Dream's heart sinks, and he freezes, not knowing what to expect.

"What are you planning, Dream?" George asks.

"Planning to win."

Dream climbs to the top of the chests and ends up face-to-face with George.

"Are you going to fight me?" George asks.

That leaves Dream feeling a little wounded.

"Why, you got any offers?"

"Am I supposed to get on my hands and knees or something?" George asks.

"I've gotten some propositions," Dream says, brushing over George's remark.

"Hm, makes it sound like you have something I need. I imagine it's quite the opposite," George says.

Dream quirks an eyebrow, curious as to what he could have. He gives a hum as he scrolls through his hotbar one-by-one, eventually landing on a piece of leather.

I knew I was missing something.

“I’m sure I don’t have to tell you what I’m holding,” George says.

“How did you-”

“Tommy thought it would be a good idea to bring Spirit on vacation, just to flex on you. He’s just not very smart, not his fault,” George says. “How about, I don’t offer you anything, you give me your scavenger hunt items, and I don’t burn the only thing you hold dear on this server?”

He digs a hole and fills it with lava in front of him.

Just then, they both see Sapnap approaching, and put away all their visible items.

“What’s going on here, boys?” Sapnap asks, joining their voice call.

“Nothing at all,” Dream says.

“No, nothing to see here,” George agrees.

“Then... you guys wouldn’t mind if I stuck around? Just pretend I’m not here,” Sapnap says.

“Of course not,” Dream and George say at the same time.

“Carry on then,” Sapnap says.

The pair look at each other, both waiting for the other to speak first.

“So, Dream, what do you think about the predicament you’re in?” George asks.

“I think you’re lying about your position of power,” Dream replies.

“Hmm, are you sure you like those odds?” George asks.

“When things get rough, I tend to come out on top,” Dream says.

“Damn, Dream! I know I said pretend I’m not here, but that’s pretty forward,” Sapnap teases.

“Yeah Dream, we’re recording,” George says. There’s a hint of something bitter in his voice that Dream is sure only he noticed.

“I think that’s my cue to leave boys, you have fun,” Sapnap says.

The moment Sapnap turns his back Dream takes his sword in his, wanting a weapon he can swing faster. George’s end goes quiet as the only sound is the crunch of Dream’s sword.

“Dream,” George says vacantly.

There’s a beat of silence.

“DREAM! I DIDN’T LEAVE THE CALL-” Sapnap says in disbelief.

You’ve got to be kidding me.

“Um... meow?” Dream says with a nervous laugh.

Sapnap starts crying laughing as George respawns and gathers his things. Dream groans, seeing that Sapnap is too busy convulsing to see all the weapons and armor George picks up.

You've got to be fucking kidding me.

The two wait for Sapnap to recover, audibly sniffing and wiping a tear from his eye. By the time he looks back to his monitor, George is standing innocently next to Dream, who is wielding a netherite sword.

<Sapnap> DREAM IS DISQUALIFIED FOR MURDER

<Sapnap> ALL HIS ITEMS WILL BE DEPOSITED TO THE MIDDLE, HELP YOURSELVES

“No hard feelings, man, but I have to do this,” Sapnap says.

Dream didn't want to live in the same world as Sapnap

“Sapnap, you can't put Spirit in some free-for-all pile. C'mon, Sapnap, it's *Spirit*,” Dream pleads.

“Sorry Dream, those are the rules,” Sapnap says.

“I mean you were the only one *escalating*,” George says with a hint of contempt. Dream's shoulders sink like a kicked puppy. The way George speaks, it sounds like he's saying ‘ *this is what you wanted, you did this to yourself* .’

I don't want this.

I can't stand it.

I wish I could fix this.

George's player model looks back at him almost knowingly, and he can vividly hear George's voice in his mind.

“Fix it then.”

That thought sticks with him as he watches George sorting through chests over a sunset backdrop. Players rush from the outskirts of the beach towards the chests, hoping to snatch up some of Dream's items, but they all know it's pretty much guaranteed George has won.

Scrolling back through the death messages, he sees the carnage George left in the chatlog.

George waits until the very last moment to put the last of his scavenger hunt items in his chest, just to toy with the competition.

Everyone regroups into one channel as Sapnap declares the game finished. During the item count, no one is surprised when George comes out on top with thirty-seven items, the closest adversary coming out to twenty-three.

“He was in the lead by *fourteen*!?” Skeppy asks. Bad chastises him with a punch and disappointed muttering.

“Well, I don't think it's a surprise we were all beat by Georgenotfound. Georgenotfound really is best minecraft player, aren't you Georgenotfound?” Tommy continues, trying to press his buttons.

“This was really fun today, we all did amazing,” Nihachu says cheerfully.

“Thank you, Nikki, it was a valiant effort on everyone’s part,” Wilbur says.

“Nah, you all kinda sucked,” Sapnap says.

The group bursts out into laughter and arguments, all gathering around the campfire to settle into their nightly ritual of fun and banter by firelight. Sapnap congratulates George as the day’s winner, explaining his prize and teasing the next day’s event, but Dream’s mind is elsewhere.

There’s no ignoring and hoping things get better. This is just another one of his many battles- it has to be faced head-on- if he could figure out how to do that. Dream isn’t used to feeling so unsure, so at a loss for options.

He mentally walks through his process, back to the best advice he can think of for any situation: don’t be afraid to ask for advice for said situation.

Dream waits patiently for the night to finish, until Sapnap has wrapped up and he’s alone in the call with him.

“Hey, can you hop on Discord DMs? I need some advice,” Dream asks.

“Yeah sure?” Sapnap says curiously.

Dream

i know george told you we had a fight the other day

Sapnap

im not a snitch but

...

yeah

Dream

youve also probably noticed that im not

like

doing well right now

Sapnap

yeah

that too

Dream

i really fucked up man

i dont want things to get worse

i want everything to go back to normal

i miss him

Dream pauses, seeing Sapnap start to type. He quickly opens his keyboard again.

Dream

i miss us

all of us

the team

Sapnap

this is a great start but

im not the person you need to be telling this to

Dream

how do i even say that to him?

Sapnap

exactly how you just told me

Dream

haha

its hard for me to sort out how i feel

about this

Sapnap

alright

how bout you write eeeeverything out

any thoughts or feelings that come to mind when you think

yknow

about this

Dream is perfectly content pretending that Sapnap doesn't pick up on his underlying affections. They've known each other long enough to have learned each other's giveaways, but right now, Dream wants to sit in his bubble where those feelings belong to him and only him. That way, he'll be safe. He'll be safe and comfortable and only he has to know.

Write down all of his feelings? He can do that.

Dream starts with what's immediately on his mind; he opens a notepad document and lets his brain flow out onto the page without a filter.

George

I hate that we're fighting.

I don't even like calling this fighting. I've felt an unprecedented sense of emptiness in the past few days, and some fault of my mind redirected that desire for conflict onto you. Conflict is easy, conflict is what I know. I feel satisfied after winning in a way that's comfortable and familiar to me. It's a rising and falling of tension that I balance so naturally without thinking.

You give me a different kind of satisfaction.

I can't place the way I feel when we talk. I can't describe the way I enjoy your company. I can't fathom the emotions that I experience when I think about you- I don't think any number of lifetimes would be enough to name and identify them all.

And that scares me.

If I can't identify it, if I can't name it, can't quantify it, then I have no power in that situation. The idea of that is terrifying to me. No one has ever made me yield to my own personal boundaries like this before. No one has made me so terrified yet so desperate to give in.

It's easy to block out those emotions with conflict, to pretend they're not there and cloud the emptiness in me with mock purpose. Those feelings don't just disappear though. When I try to relieve the tension I've created, that uncertainty, that magnetic desire to keep pushing, it interferes with everything I do.

I can't function because all I want to do is toss myself into the vast unknown of what we could be.

Me and you.

You, George.

Before Dream can circle back to anything he wrote, he copies the entire thing and sends it to Sapnap. He knows he wrote something over-the-top that Sapnap would probably make fun of for being pretentious.

Dream

this is so stupid

god this feels so high school

Sapnap

its not dude

this is

this is really like profound

Dream

“like profound”?

Sapnap

shut up

just listen

reread what you wrote

what parts does he need to hear?

All of it. Every last bit of it.

Dream

i have an idea what to say

or at least a start

Sapnap

a start is good

Yes, a start is good.

Driven by a small boost of confidence, Dream opens his DMs with George.

Dream

im sorry for being an ass

can we talk

george

sure

Dream

its not an excuse but im going through some shit

i shouldnt have taken it out on you

you deserve better than that

i cant do any of this without you

george

it wasnt just you

takes two to

i

i dont wanna say tango but i dont have another word so im just saying tango

Dream

hah its fine

takes two to tango

george

do you want to play on the SMP?

no one else on right now

Dream

why does this feel like the gamer equivalent of hanging out under the bleachers at night

george

just get on

They both log back onto the server, meeting up in front of the resort. The two of them stand awkwardly on the front porch, trying to remember how to start a conversation. George talking to him like he's walking on eggshells is a stab to Dream's heart, but he doesn't know how to ease the tension.

"This game is a lot more beautiful. The beach looks amazing at night," Dream says.

"Yeah. I miss the beach," George hums.

"I was planning on taking a big trip to the coast this summer when the year started. Thought I deserved it after hitting a million. So much for that," Dream says with a strained laugh.

"We could..." George says, trailing off towards the end.

"We could what?" Dream asks.

"Go together. We could go on a trip together. To the beach," George says.

"Depends, are we talking a beach in Florida or England?" Dream asks.

"Brighton beach, obviously," George replies.

"Why obviously? I like it when my beaches have, y'know, sand," Dream says.

"Brighton beach is temperate and *nice*. I like my beaches to not feel like they're assaulting me," George says back.

“So you don’t want to go to Disneyworld?” Dream asks.

George huffs.

“Got you there,” Dream says.

“How about you flip a coin? Heads you come to England, tails I go to Florida,” George says.

“Alright, I’ll do it right now. I’ll get the ticket as soon as I flip it, no joke,” Dream says.

He opens a tab and pulls up a coin flipper.

It comes up tails.

“Aw, dammit. Brighton beach it is,” Dream says, closing the tab.

George lets out a raw, pure laugh that makes Dream’s face heat up.

“Brighton beach it is.”

This is All Gonna Be Over Soon

George sleeps better that night than he had in days. A weight had been lifted talking to Dream like normal again, and that was all he had really wanted.

In the morning, he decides to treat himself to a lazy morning. He lays in bed, kicking back and tracing the shapes in the paint on the ceiling.

After his mind wakes up past the point of being able to laze about, he eases into his routine of sorting through laundry and checking his phone for notifications in the bathroom.

That's... strange.

George blinks at his lockscreen, showing what looks to be half a million missed calls. Opening his phone, he sees there are missed calls from almost all of his online friends that have his number. The most recent is from Sapnap, who looks to have been trying to contact him since after George fell asleep.

In his tired state, nothing registers as an immediate problem, and he goes about brushing his teeth.

He opens his twitter as per usual, but the sight of his timeline makes his toothbrush fall out of his mouth.

Mouth hung ajar, he scrolls further and further, as if he'll reach some consolation that this is all one elaborate joke.

The more tweets he sees, the more that sinking feeling of impending doom starts to settle in his chest. Only, the doom isn't impending- it's already in full swing.

Panpas Simp

@pandascantvpforshit

Please respect George's privacy at this time!! Being outed is a serious issue, and If I see anyone posting the DM leaks I will block and report you. #georgenotfound #stopdoxxing

GeorgenotfoundisOVERparty @itsaxngelique

The screenshots are obviously faked. Ge*rge making fun of coming out is honestly disgusting. Can't wait until everyone realizes how trash he is. #georgenotfound #georgenotfoundisoverparty

~*°**Gogy Incorporated**°*~ @everygoodnamewastaken

You people are sick. Addresses, phone numbers, creating pointless drama, and outing people's sexualities?. #georgenotfound #stopdoxxing

= Green Guardians Gang = @DreamTeaTWT

! DREAM TEA BREAKING NEWS !

All three Dream Team members (Sapnap, Dream, and Georgenotfound) have posted private or incriminating tweets in what appears to be a triple account hack.

Tweets include personal DMs between Dream and his ex-girlfriend, a compilation of mental-health related DMs that Sapnap has ignored, and arguably the most controversial- a private DM between Sapnap and George where the latter comes out as bisexual.

(Follow for updates and all Dream Team related twitter drama.)

#dreamteam #georgenotfound #sapnap #dreamwastaken

George knows he has to look at his own account, he knows he has to delete the tweet, and he *knows* he has to address the situation. Can't he pretend to be in a world where this isn't real? Where he gets to process his breakthrough in his own time, slowly tell his closest friends, build a strong sense of identity, and then announce it to his fans with pride?

Why did he deserve to be robbed of that?

He sits in his computer chair, steadying his breathing, knowing he has to face this.

Reluctantly, George opens his own profile and holds his breath as he looks at his most recent post.

His eyes scan over the screenshots.

For a moment, the world stops spinning. His body goes numb.

He quickly deletes the tweet and shuts off his phone, putting it facedown on the desk.

George sinks into his hoodie and pulls the strings closed, desperate to cover his face and hide. But he can't hide from this.

He hears a Discord notification ping from his computer.

Sapnap

are you awake

are you okay

george

please answer man

im so sorry this happened

istg im gonna find this fucker

can you msg me back

i need to know you're okay

Sapnap

i just redid my password and everything

idk how the fuck this idiot managed to get all three of us when we all did 2fa

im gonna stay up until you respond

Sapnap

i had lunch and took a walk

dreams assuring me hes fine but i know hes lying

please take care of yourself

im worried about you

Sapnap

i kept refreshing your twitter to see if you were up yet and i saw you deleted the post

can you talk?

oh thank god youre typing

george

yeah hi im up

Sapnap

ARE YOU OKAY

george

hah no

Sapnap

jesus man

can you call?

george

yeah just a sec

"George?" Sapnap says.

"It's okay, I'm right here," George sighs.

"Okay, okay. It's okay," Sarnap says, more to himself than anything. "Hey, dude, I know we have an event for the SMP event today but I understand if you can't come. Say the word and the whole thing is postponed."

"Stop worrying about me, I'm going," George says.

"You sure? You don't need to deal with the extra stress of talking to Dream either," Sarnap says.

"No, Dream and I made up yesterday. We talked it out and everything. I would much rather have a distraction right now," George says.

"Alright, as long as you're okay. It'll be okay," Sarnap says assuringly.

"Since when did you become so worrisome? You sound like a mother hen," George says.

"I don't know what kind of British nonsense 'motha' hen' is but I'm just concerned about you dude. What can I say, you make me all soft and shit," Sarnap chuckles.

"Shut up, idiot. Anyways, I'm going to try and eat something whilst I sort out my twitter account," George says.

"Good idea. Take it easy. If you need anything at all just hit me up, alright?" Sarnap says.

"Alright."

Alright.

He manages to get food in his system as he spends the next few hours checking and double-checking every social media account he owns.

George decides upon a mid-evening shower, needing a moment alone somewhere confined. He ends up spending over an hour, letting the warm water pool around his feet, mind void of any thoughts.

His alarm goes off from where his phone is resting on the sink, and he forces himself to step out into the cold.

Throwing on a clean t-shirt and pajama bottoms, he takes to his PC, setting up his recording. George gets settled onto the SMP while Sarnap is prepping the event.

He enters the call with bated breath, expecting to be the elephant in the room, waiting for something to go horribly wrong. Thankfully, no one seems to be acting differently to George or the other members of the dream team.

In hindsight, he feels a bit silly for thinking his friends would be uncomfortable or awkward. The anxious lump that had formed in his throat subsided as he eased into casual conversation. Be able to go through a day like normal would be great right about now.

"I think everybody's here, let's get to it gang," Sarnap says, cracking his knuckles. "Once again, I've had you all turn in your stuff to me. For this game, however, you will be provided a kit, and our previous day's winner, Mr. Gogy, is starting with the five items he requested."

Sarnap drops him a god apple, an invisibility potion, an ender pearl, a lava bucket, and a water bucket. Everyone receives colored leather armor, stone tools, a stack of colored concrete, and a stack of food.

"No shields?" Dream complains.

"What? George's stuff is so OP!" Punz says.

"Fucking Georgenotfound," Tommy grumbles.

The whole group starts throwing a fit, more for the drama than being actually upset.

"Alright, alright, enough. I'd bear in mind that teams are randomized, so it would be in your best interest to see if you're actually, y'know, against George. Who, might I add, kicked your asses fair and square, pardon my language Bad," Sapnap says.

The call goes quiet save for the sound of keyboards and mice as all of them check their inventories and don their armor. Everyone looks around, taking in their teams.

"George. *George*. Buddy! Ol' chap, so glad to be on a team with my good friend George," Tommy says.

"Sapnap, come on. You're allowing children in this game?" George asks.

"Hey, Tubbo!" Niki says.

"Tubbo!" Tubbo says back excitedly.

"So as some of you have already seen, you'll be grouped into teams of three. If you're stupid or colorblind, or both, in George's case, all six teams are listed over here," Sapnap says. Everyone follows him to a giant leaderboard of signs.

Blue Team	Red Team
GeorgeNotFound	Badboyhalo
TommyInnit	Tubbo_
Karl Jacobs	Nihachu
Orange Team	Yellow Team
Dream	ItsAlyssa
Skeppy	Ponk
The_Eret	Thunder1408
Green Team	Purple Team
WilburSoot	ItsFundy
Callahan	Punz

"Are we gonna talk about Red team? Because I would love to see five hours of that team just talking," Eret says.

"Tubbo and I getting split up? Again?! What is it with you people and making me kill my best friend?" Tommy asks, throwing his hands up.

"You're complaining? How am I supposed to kill Bad?" Skeppy asks.

"You know what? I have no problems with this. Prepare to get annihilated," Punz says.

George smiles to himself, confident in his team's chances. Tommy is much more skilled than he lets on with his bratty teen persona, and though Karl hasn't been on the SMP long, he's a good sport and quick learner.

"Okay listen up you big babies. If you would follow me to our arena, you will see all six bases are organized in a circle with a safe zone in the middle. The safe zone has beds for each of you, and extra sets of kit items if you happen to die and lose yours. In every base is a flag zone with a banner for each team color. Over the course of two rounds, your objective is to collect every banner of your team color. First to secure all banners of their color and bring them back to their own flag zone wins that round. If two different teams win each round, they will face off in a tie-breaker battle to the death," Sapnap says.

"Should we have written all that down? That was a lot," Fundy says.

"I'm not repeating all of that. It's six-way capture the flag, get all the banners for your team color, it'll make sense when you start," Sapnap sighs.

The group tours the arena, ooh-ing and aah-ing at the build. George giggles to himself at the image of Sapnap chugging energy drinks in the early hours of dawn, tearing his hair out until he deemed it perfect.

"Question- what's that menacing-looking prison that's chilling in the sky?" Eret asks.

"Glad you asked," Sapnap says. He goes into creative mode and flies to the top. "This, my friends, is the shame cage. The name is self explanatory. Because we aren't lawless filthy animals, this game has a few rules. Anyone who kills in the safezone is disqualified. Anyone who helps another team is disqualified. Anyone who uses items other than what I've provided is disqualified. Anyone who tries to make a run for it before I give the go-ahead is- you guessed it- disqualified. Disqualified players will be banished to the shame cage above the arena. Players are very encouraged to point and laugh at the shame cage and otherwise bully the rule-breakers."

"You're welcome for the OP, by the way," Dream says.

"Thank you, Dream, for OPing me. Promise I won't abuse it... too much. If you could all please set your spawns for me and head to your team bases, we can proceed with the game," Sapnap says.

George hops on his bed and makes his way to the blue team base, configuring his hot bar to his liking. With this big of an advantage, this will be a walk in the park.

"Once you get into your own team channels and are all at your bases, we can start the countdown," Sapnap says.

Moving to a call with Karl and Tommy, George immediately gets a headache.

"ARE WE READY TO KICK SOME ASS? GEORGENOTFOUND, MR. BEAST GUY, LET'S. FUCKING. GO. POG!" Tommy shouts.

"Yeah, uh, what he said," Karl adds.

"Both of you, huddle up. Game plan," George says. The three of them gather in a circle. "Our biggest threat right now is Dream. I have an advantage, so I can target Dream and just make sure he doesn't make progress. Karl, you go and sneak flags from teams that are distracted or have no defense."

"Alright Big G, who am I killing?" Tommy asks, rubbing his hands together.

"Tommy, I know you can hold your own, so you stay on defense. Fend off anyone who tries to take a flag from us, and keep watch of who has what. Climb up, get a good vantage point, and scout out for Karl. Keep him informed," George says.

"Wh- wh- but I-" Tommy sputters on the other end. "...I'll do you proud, George. I will get on de walls."

He doesn't have to look to know Tommy's saluting.

<Sapnap> you all look ready so lets get this show on the road

<Sapnap> 3

<Sapnap> 2

<Sapnap> tubbo what are you doing

<Tubbo_> bese

<Tubbo_> bees ar out!

<Nihachu> He's still on the base

<Bad> He's just admiring the little bumble muffins

<Sapnap> he was technically just looking over the edge so Tubbo gets a pass

<Sapnap> i do see skeppy trying to sneak out from orange base tho

<Skeppy> u ddindt see anthiynggg

<Sapnap> and thats our first shame cage

<Skeppy> YOULL NVEER TAKE ME ALiVE1!!!!1!!

"He's just trying to get his clickbait title. I can see 'I ruined Dream's summer vacation' on my youtube recommended already," Tommy says.

"Oh yeah? And what's your title Tommyinnit? 'I killed Dream in capture the flag,' I'm guessing?" George says.

"Wow, I'm flattered you think I would kill Dream. And that's a lot coming from 'Minecraft but it's

Summer Vacation,” Tommy says back.

He says it insultingly, but George feels a sense of pride in that. He doesn't need to clickbait Dream in his videos. People watch knowing they're a dynamic duo; you have George and you get Dream too.

“I'm just happy to be here. We're gonna do great,” Karl says.

“Fuck yeah! Let's go blue team!” Tommy says with a round of applause.

<Sapnap> okay now that that idiot is out

<Sapnap> you can all start on go

<Skeppy> gO!1!

<Sapnap> SHUT UP

<Sapnap> 321

<Sapnap> just go already

George takes off towards orange base in determination, sprinting straight for Dream.

“Green team has Callahan, so they only have two people communicating by voice. I think I can take Callahan out and sneak by the other two,” Karl says.

“Yes, Karl, king! He has a thousand IQ!” Tommy says.

“Good plan, I'm coming up on Dream right now,” George says.

He circles around the orange base, waiting for Dream to break away from his group.

Eret seems to be defending, surveying the arena while Dream tries to slip out from behind. His mistake.

George sidles up behind Dream, lava ready one slot next to his weapon. Just as he prepares to strike, Dream does a one-eighty, pulling a flawless turnaround and hitting George with his axe. He stumbles for a minute, caught off-guard by the sudden retaliation.

When George gets a hold of himself again, he walks backward just enough to bait Dream out, placing his lava down. The timing is flawless, and Dream is caught on fire, his only option to flee.

I've got you now .

George chases him around the arena, strafing to keep him away from the safe zone and herding him into a corner. Dream is forced into the walls of the yellow base, George purposefully chasing him towards where the other team might see him.

Ponk, who's on defense, spots Dream, who's blocked himself in against a wall to heal and tries to swoop in for the killsteal.

“What are you doing, George?” Karl asks.

“I'm letting Ponk get a few hits on him. I'll let them both get low,” he replies.

Not noticing George, Ponk engages in a 1v1 with Dream, getting his licks in before George comes up from behind and lands a finishing blow on both of them.

“Yes! I got Dream and Ponk, I can go for our flag from yellow whilst I’m here,” George says.

Jack is preoccupied with his own fight, and Alyssa is barely arriving from the middle after being killed. She tries to make a run for their flag zone, but George makes short work of her.

“Okay, I’m coming back from green with our flag *and* orange’s. If Dream wants it, he’ll have to come to us,” Karl says.

“Good strat! If we collect his team’s flags, he would be forced to face us, and I can call out for George the moment he tries anything. Oh, guys, we have this one in the bag. Pogchamps, everyone!” Tommy says.

“Awesome! I’ll get their flag from this team, too,” George says.

The team regroups at their base, putting together their spoils. George heads towards the center, staying on the border of the middle, waiting for Dream to respawn.

“Okay, Tommy, start fortifying our base. Karl, I’m going to keep Dream distracted so you can go for his team,” George says.

<Dream> what are you doing

<GeorgeNotFound> just hanging out

George stands just outside of the safe zone, face to face with Dream, who’s just respawned and geared back up.

<Dream> are you gonna stand here all round? great teamwork

<GeorgeNotFound> they can take care of themselves

They stand perfectly still, watching each other for the first move.

Dream punches him with a steak and hits the ground running. George tails him as he tries to run to his base for backup, smirking when he spots the invisible potion’s particle effects. Eret is completely caught by surprise by a floating sword, and by the time he reacts, he’s already done for.

The _Eret was slain by KarlJacobs

“Karl, take all their banners back to our base. We should have three of our flags and most of Dream’s, so I can stay on defense and swap with Tommy,” George says.

<Sapnap> Welcome our new addition to cage

<Punz> COME ON

<Sapnap> I literally saw you holding an iron sword

<Sapnap> Where did you even get iron??

<Punz> Your mom’s house

<Sapnap> That’s really helping your case

<Sapnap> PUNZ IS OUT EVERYONE POINT AND LAUGH

"Haha, stupid Punz," Tommy says.

George looks into his camera with an over-the-top schoolboy laugh, pointing at his screen.

"Punz is throwing! He's throwing, what a stinky dumb boy," Karl says.

"This is perfect. Tommy, you go with Karl to Purple base. They're probably all arguing with Punz in VC, get them while they're disorganized," George says.

The two give him a nod, heading back out into the fray.

George sits in wait patiently, reading the chat and taking stock of everyone's current standings.

"Be careful, Karl. Purpled just ate, and Fundy is trying to flank from the right," Tommy says.

"I can take Fundy, just keep Purpled off me," Karl responds.

"You both look out; I think red team is trying to sneak in while you guys are fighting," George says.

As he's watching out for Tommy and Karl, he hears footsteps nearing and blocks being placed.

Nice try.

George whips his head around to see Dream towering into their base. He stops, looking like a deer caught in the headlights for a split second. The moment George makes a move, Dream tunnels through the wall and blocks up his path behind him.

There's something thrilling about the chase, the adrenaline rush of having him marked as a target. There's something satisfying about having Dream in his sights.

He chews his lip in concentration while hunting Dream down, focused on him and him only. George finds Dream tunneling down and sneaks over the edge, looking down curiously.

At that moment, his heart drops at the sound of someone punching him from behind.

There's a blur of George falling down into the hole, looking up to Dream a few blocks above with gravel in hand.

<GeorgeNotFound> DREAM

<GeorgeNotFound> DONT

His fingers seize over his keys as he suffocates under the falling weight.

George pauses over the respawn button, watching Dream pick up his items, dumbfounded.

This always happens.

All I do is focus on Dream.

"Okay, I'm right by the base, red team is down-crap. Dream's got George's stuff, he's right outside," Karl says.

"Guys, I've got the last flag. Hold him off until I get back, Karl. I place it down, we win," Tommy

says.

"George, don't gear back up, just run over here and punch him with your fists, I need help," Karl says urgently.

"On my way," George confirms.

It's neck and neck, Dream and Eret are closing in while the two do as much as they can to keep them away. Dream catches George in lava and leaves Eret to finish him off.

George respawns as quickly as humanly possible, running back to watch

"It's all you, Tommy," he says.

"I'm almost there-" Tommy says.

The call goes dead silent for a second.

<TommyInnit> I DID IT I PLACED THE LAST FLAG WEVE GOTTEM ALL

<Dream> NO NO NO I BROKE ONE

<TommyInnit> AFTER I PLACED IT SAPNAP CHECK MY STREAM I DID IT

<Sapnap> checking stream rn

There's only the sound of labored breathing.

<Sapnap> after viewing the video evidence

Sapnap takes his sweet time.

"Come on," Tommy whispers.

<Sapnap> BLUE TEAM WAS VICTORIOUS!!

<Sapnap> THAT IS ONE ROUND FOR GEORGE TOMMY AND KARL

"LET'S GO! POG GODDAMN CHAMP!" Tommy yells.

"I was a little close to throwing my PC out of my window there," Karl says, relieved.

"Good work, we win these," George says.

<Sapnap> You all have 2 minutes to heal and strategize ill refill armor and supplies and redistribute banners

<Sapnap> Be in your bases at the end of that 2 minutes or it's to the cage

<GeorgeNotFound> wait am i getting my special items back?

<Sapnap> Nope im not going digging around in anyones inventories

<Sapnap> Especially when they won it fair and square by beating a colorblind idiot

<Sapnap> ;-*

"You have *got* to be kidding me," George groans.

<Skeppy> r u lettign us out???

<Sapnap> Im not letting out filthy blue trolls and punk cheaters either

<Punz> 8====D

<Badboyhalo> What is that

<Sapnap> Dont worry about it

"So... good news and bad news," George says.

"I'd like the good news first, please," Karl says.

"Good news: Dream's team is still down Skeppy, and Punz isn't an issue either," George starts.

"Bad news?" Tommy asks.

"Dream has all my stuff. We at least know to be on the lookout for lava, ender-"

"Arsehole! What is his- oh, sorry, Dream is whispering me. He's being real annoying-like," Tommy says.

"Ignore him, he's probably just trying to throw you off," Karl offers.

He and George look over to Dream, who's currently shifting and unshifting just outside his base.

"Oh god, he's really being a bastard right now, and he's whispering it to me, he won't even type in chat," Tommy says.

"Stop reading it, then. We need to focus up because Dream is good at adapting. He may be down a teammate, but he has an edge, and we know he's going to target us. I don't doubt he'll gapple and pearl," George says.

"Oh, that pearl won't be the only thing he's throwing. You're over, Dream, piece of shit," Tommy says.

"You alright there, Tommy?" Karl asks.

"It would be so easy to just go over and punch him. I would be back so fast, just one good slug to the face. That ought to do him some good," Tommy says.

"Tommy. Listen. Do not go over there. We need to rethink our game plan. If Dream's going to be targeting me, I would rather lead him away while you two get something done. Do you think you could handle flag hunting while Karl defends?" George says.

There's no response save for the frantic typing on Tommy's end.

"That fucking does it," Tommy says. He cuts through the arena, running straight for Dream holding his sword.

"Oh no," Karl says.

"God- Tommy!" George shouts, running after him.

By the time George reaches him, Tommy is already launching a full attack on Dream, who simply sits there without fighting back.

"Stop it. If you kill him, you're going to get disqualified! Calm, Tommy!" George says. He punches Tommy off, getting in between the two.

Tommy huffs angrily, Dream's dopey player skin staring back with its smug-looking smile.

"Alright, alright. He's not worth it anyway," Tommy grumbles.

"Thank god, that could have been bad," Karl sighs.

<Sapnap> Times up losers

Oh shit.

<Sapnap> Oh what do we have here

<Tommyinnit> nothing

<Tommyinnit> mind your business bitch

<Sapnap> TWO NEW PRISONERS

<Sapnap> EVERYONE READY YOUR POINTING FINGERS

George rolls his eyes and practically collapses on his desk while Sapnap teleports the both of them.

"You couldn't have just ignored him?" George asks.

"Hey, George, I have my honor to defend. Someone needs to punch Dream in the face everyone once in a while," Tommy says.

Punching Dream in the face every once in a while sounds great.

"Guys... what's our plan here?" Karl asks.

"Just focus on defense, Karl. The best you can hope for is killing teams who come to you. We already won the first game anyway," George says.

He walks up to the bars, looking down at Karl standing around nervously.

"I guess we're stuck here until the tiebreaker," George says.

"This is so stupid," Tommy mutters.

<Skeppy> tell me abt it

They turn their heads towards him.

"Are you watching my stream?" Tommy asks.

<Skeppy> yeah

<Skeppy> im bored

"Serves you right, kid thief," Tommy laughs.

"Oh god, they're all coming after me, I don't know what to do guys," Karl says.

He's blocked in trying to heal while at least three teams are raiding their base for banners. A full out brawl has broken out in their flag zone. Meanwhile, Dream is towering over Karl's hiding spot and pouring lava overhead.

"Why are there dripping particles above me?" Karl asks.

He screams out as the block breaks above his head, burning to death as Dream moves on to the players nearby.

It's difficult to root for Karl; the wish for a teammate to win is overpowered by his innate desire to see Dream succeed. He stops watching Karl completely, focused on Dream's hunt.

<Sapnap> Karl what

<KarlJacobs> just put me in jail already

<Sapnap> I dont want to marry a dirty criminal

<KarlJacobs> if you dont love me at my worst you dont deserve me at my honk

<Sapnap> Heart been broke so many times...

Karl is stood in the middle, killing anyone who respawns near him until Sapnap moves him to the cage.

"I just wanted to be with you guys, there's no point," Karl says.

"Yeah, this sucks. We have a good view up here I guess," George says.

A good view indeed- they're able to watch the rest of the round from a birds-eye, commenting on the different teams. All George is really watching is Dream, though, and he's definitely getting to see quite the massacre.

The end of the round isn't nearly as close as the first, Dream's advantage putting him in a considerable lead up until he gets his last flag.

<Dream> LAST ONE

<Sapnap> We have our two finalists, blue team and orange team

They're all teleported to the middle of the arena where Sapnap is clearing the area. He drops three shields on either end of the circle.

<Sapnap> Final showdown

<Sapnap> Same kit, but with shields this time

George swallows. Shields are going to give Dream a big upper hand.

<Sapnap> Start on 1

<Sapnap> 3

<Sapnap> 2

<Sapnap> 1

They take off, proceeding like a normal fight. Each player takes on another so they're evenly spread out, Karl taking Skeppy and Tommy going for Eret.

George tries to channel everything he's learned, but Dream's timing is too perfect, and he can't manage to land a single hit.

Get creative. Find a solution.

He runs around the circle, throwing off Dream to go help Karl finish off Skeppy.

"I've got Eret," Tommy says.

"Good. Dream is over there healing, we can all gang up on him. As long as we disable his shield and block him in, we're good. Don't let him split us up," George says.

The three of them pile onto Dream, surrounding him at all sides.

"He's so low, there's no way he one v. threes this," Karl says.

Dream manages to back up and ender pearls behind them, eating his golden apple. Tommy is singled out from the group and stunned for a second, which is enough for Dream to take him out.

"I'm down. It's all you guys," Tommy says.

George tries to stick together, but Karl is pushed away and killed in a matter of moments.

"Yeah, I couldn't take Dream. Sorry guys. I placed a block over his lava, so all he has left is water at least," Karl says.

This is it. You can do it.

George faces him off in a one-on-one.

They get each other low, mostly staying in place save for when they try to eat.

He's got to be low. It's all about the timing.

George focuses on the timing.

He takes a deep breath and steady on his mouse.

Take the shot .

Letting his shield down, he jumps and strikes.

The loud crunching noise echoes in his earphones, and George can't believe it.

Dream was slain by GeorgeNotFound

"LET'S FUCKING GO, GEORGE!" Tommy yells.

"Honk yeah!" Karl cheers.

George lets out a breath, swelling with pride.

<Sapnap> AND WE HAVE OUR WINNER

Sapnap moves everyone back to the same call, which is a mess of yelling.

"George you actually beat me for once," Dream laughs.

"Ooh, can we get baby rages in chat?" Tommy says.

"I'm not raging, come on," Dream says.

The call erupts in oohs and laughter.

"Aw, I won Dream. You gonna cry? Pee yourself, maybe?" George teases.

"Are you kidding? I love it when you best me. Makes me feel proud. Besides I like watching you win," Dream says.

I like watching you win

Obviously George knows this to be true, but hearing out loud is a whole other ballgame. He plays it over again in his head, lost in the sound while everyone's talking fades into the background.

"George?" Sapnap asks.

His name snaps him back to reality.

"Yeah?" He asks.

"I said you're getting good at PVP."

"Oh," George says. "Thanks. I have a good teacher."

Dream's small chuckle makes him smile.

"The sun's starting to set," someone says.

They all gather at the bonfire, chatting comfortably.

"I have to head out already," Karl says.

"I think I'm leaving early too. Got stuff to work on," Dream adds.

A few other people chime in to say their goodbyes.

"Alright, gives me more time to set up then," Sapnap says.

"I don't have any homework today, I'll stick around," Tommy offers.

"I'll help you clean up this mess. Is it okay if I stream?" George says.

"Sure. I'm going to get food, I'll be back in a bit," Sapnap replies.

It's only Tommy and George left in the call.

"Hey George, I didn't want to shit on your day by mentioning it earlier but I'm sorry about the shit that happened to you," Tommy says.

George's body stills. The excitement of the night's game had let him forget about what was waiting for him on twitter.

"If it were me I might've quit altogether. It's awesome that you came on the server today, man," Tommy says.

His streaming persona is off, and the maturity in his voice really comes through.

"Thanks. To be honest, playing with friends helped a lot," George says.

"It's a bit hard to feel like a person sometimes. I couldn't explain it to someone outside of this job, but theres this... almost disconnect. When those two world cross over it's weird as shit. I forget how different our lives are from other people's because that's just our lives to us, I guess," Tommy muses.

It's hard to feel like a person sometimes. That sentiment resonates with George in a strange way. Tommy's right, explaining his life to someone outside of this world would be impossible.

"That's really... insightful," George says.

"Yeah, yeah. My point was just that not letting yourself get stripped of any other life is hard. Especially when people pull shit like this. I struggle with the pressure sometimes and I don't have it half as bad as you and the dream team do. You're a strong dude, George," Tommy says.

"That actually means lot. Thank you. I got used to convincing myself I'm more okay with it than I am. I know Sapnap and Dream do too," George says.

"God, I don't know how Dream does it. He's one remarkable guy," Tommy says.

"Yeah. He is."

"I'm back losers. What are we talking about?" Sapnap asks.

"Just how complete shit you are," Tommy says without missing a beat.

"Oh really? That's not what your mom said last night," Sapnap says back.

"I'm not the one who didn't compete in my own game. Take a page out of Scott Major's book, at least he had the balls to lose in MCC," Tommy jokes.

"Ha ha, Tommy. Very funny," Sapnap says.

"I'm gonna go live," George says.

After the two give him a go ahead, he ends his recording and sets up his stream.

He takes a few minutes to say hello, doing his best not to look at the shitshow that must be going on in chat.

"I'm just going to help Sapnap clean up the server. You guys will get a sneak peak of where we did my next few videos," George says.

He and the others mostly shoot the shit for a while, idly breaking down the arena. George tries his best to stay unbothered by the lines of scrolling text on his other monitor, thankful for remembering to turn off text to speech.

From Tommy's end, there's suddenly a loud, impatient knocking.

"Mum! No, I was just going to bed! N- yeah I know it's late!" Tommy yells. "Sorry guys, Mother Innit isn't too pleased with me being on this late. I have a paper due tomorrow, too, so I'd better head out."

"I thought you said you didn't have homework?" George asks.

"Well, college is online, so I technically don't *have* homework all year," Tommy says.

"You're such an idiot. Go write your paper," Sapnap says.

"Fine. Bye guys," Tommy says.

George breaks the remaining blocks of the shame cage, looking down to a flat grassland.

"That should about do it," Sapnap says.

That gives George a twinge of panic. He doesn't want Sapnap to leave. He doesn't want to be left alone to face his viewers.

"Hold on, I'll be right back," he says to the camera.

George mutes on his stream and turns his facecam off, taking a few seconds to breathe with his hands pressing into his eyes.

"I need to say something about what happened on twitter," George says.

"Do you want me to leave?" Sapnap asks.

"No. Can you mute and stay? I don't think I can do this alone," George whispers.

"I've got you my mans. Just let me know when you're ready," Sapnap says.

"Okay."

He gets his bearings and turns everything back on.

"Before I end the stream, I wanted to discuss things going on, and it's easier for me to do this live. I'm, um, definitely not as prepared for this as I should be," George starts.

He sees a discord message from Sapnap, a simple thumbs up.

"First off, regarding my twitter account being hacked- I'm not going to address the actual posts. People are going to believe it's true or they aren't, and nothing I say will really change anyone's mind either way, and the screenshots themselves irrelevant. What matters to me is that my privacy has been violated and my trust in you guys has been broken. I don't think I can create with that on my conscience. I have one more recording after this, and I'll get those few videos up while I take a break. Don't ask me how long, because I really don't know," he continues.

George looks to his chat, not knowing what to expect. What he finds is a surprising lack of any text, only paragraphs of hearts.

"So... that's all I have to say. I hope you guys are all doing well. I'm gonna end the stream, and I hope you all have a good night. Thank you," he says.

He ends the stream there.

“How’re you holding up, man?” Sapnap asks.

“I’m trying,” George sighs.

“This is all gonna be over soon. Just wait, it’ll be okay,” Sapnap says.

George lays back against his chair, the light of his monitor cast against his face.

“Okay.”

The Long, Long Road Ahead

"The end of the summer is nigh, my friends," Sapnap says.

The whole team is gathered on the beach, all dressed up swimsuit skins. Well, all save for Dream, who put swim trunks on his white smiley face. The girls are laying on recliners (decorated white beds) while the L'manberg crew construct sandcastles. Quackity leads a game of Marco Polo, despite Schlatt's insistence that the game doesn't work in Minecraft. Others are swimming in the ocean water, hunting fish, fighting drowned, or destroying kelp.

Dream is seated with the other dream team members under the shade of a palm tree, looking on at the lazy weekend evening with a smile.

"What's on the agenda for our last day? We all didn't log on until today, as you requested, so I'm guessing it's going to be big?" Dream asks.

Sapnap stretches out on his chair.

"Just a little special something. Prepare to get your socks blown off," he says. "Is everyone ready to head out?"

The voice call is filled with excited cheers as everyone files back into the resort.

"Put your skin back on, get your inventories clear if you want. We're kicking off the fall by keeping it casual. If you could all follow me," Sapnap says.

Everyone trails behind Sapnap eagerly to the sunflower plains.

"I'm guessing it has something to do with whatever's behind this giant wall?" Eret asks.

"Why don't you all come through and find out?" Sapnap asks.

He places a piece of redstone, causing a chain reaction of opening pistons. They look up in awe at the massive carnival ground that is revealed to them, complete with rides, games, and food stands.

Everyone is speechless at the sight of the build.

"Woah," George says, breaking the silence.

"Cool trick right? Welcome, my friends, to Carnival Cloud Nine- the land of dreams," Sapnap says.

"How long did this take?! Holy shit dude!" Tommy says.

"Language," Bad pouts. "This looks amazing, by the way, Sappy. Please tell me you've been sleeping."

"Sleep is for suckers. I'll drink Monsters and die of a heart attack like a man," Sapnap responds.

"Hydration and sleep? We men... suffer and weep," Tubbo says.

"He gets it," Tommy agrees.

"And you made this all yourself?" Dream asks.

"Naturally. What can I say? I'm just that awesome," Sapnap says.

The group all tour the festival area and marvel at Sapnap's dedication. The expansive stretch of land is peppered with sunflowers and pathways, not a block left undecorated.

"Where do we even start?" Tubbo asks excitedly.

"Wherever you want! Fall is almost here, and our vacation is coming to a finish. I've had so much fun having everyone on the server together at a time when, y'know, it's been hard to be social and not super stressed. Let's have one last day to hang out, vibe, and just enjoy the end of the summer. Go have fun, everyone," Sapnap says.

Everyone shares enthusiasm and gives their thanks before separating into their own voice channels. Dream peeks over and sees that he, Sapnap, and George are the last three left in the original channel.

"Dream team goes to the fair?" Dream asks.

"Heck yeah, let's do this! What's up first?" Sapnap asks.

He scans the area for anything to catch his eye.

"Is that an archery game?" Dream asks.

"Yep," Sapnap answers.

"Interesting."

George lets out a dramatic groan.

"Dream just wants to show off. He's all pompous about how good he's been at dodge bolt practice recently. When will you stop trying to impress me, Dream?" George asks.

"Not my fault I'm awesome. And I don't *try* to impress you, it just comes naturally," Dream replies.

"Whatever simps, I'm going to own the both of you," Sapnap says, racing to pick up a bow.

He walks up to the booth confidently.

"I watched a redstone tutorial for this, check this out," Sapnap says.

Drawing his bow back all the way, he hits a target block dead center. A redstone lamp lights up and a firework goes off in response.

"What? You can do that?" George asks.

"Correction- *I* can do that," Sapnap says smugly.

Dream gives him a punch.

"You went for the closest one. Hand it over, idiot," he says.

Aiming for the farthest target, Dream carefully readies his bow. Just as he's about to release, Sapnap punches him, sending him backwards.

“Sapnap! You’re such a child. No- you’re such a Tommy,” Dream says.

Sapnap laughs, running up to where the arrow landed all the way to the side.

“Nice one. Let George try,” he says.

The bow and arrow are passed to George, who looks over the range skeptically.

“You know what,” George says. “I should-”

“DON’T!” Dream and Sapnap say in unison.

“Don’t you dare do your stupid blindfold thing. Just because you made that *one* shot that *one* time. You’re gonna get cocky and end up losing us MCC, just watch,” Dream says.

George ignores them, and Dream can hear him looping the straps of a medical mask over his headphones. With a dramatic flourish, he does a three-sixty and takes the shot.

“OW! You moron, you hit me!” Sapnap yells.

He pulls his blindfold down and neither of them can hold in their laughter at the arrow sticking out of Sapnap’s face.

“Bulls-eye? More like... Sapnap’s eye,” Dream says.

“That’s so dumb, oh my god,” George rolls his eyes.

“Wait, guys, guys, let’s settle this...” Sapnap says, running towards another booth. “...With some parkour.”

They all race over to the obstacle course excitedly.

“Hey, wait a minute, Sapnap is the one who built the course. He already knows how to do it, what a cheater,” George says.

“Joke’s on you, I just copied a design off planet Minecraft because it was two in the morning and I have no creativity,” Sapnap says.

“Last one to finish has to edit the next manhunt!” Dream yells.

He makes a beeline for the parkour, all of the boys getting rowdy, pushing and shoving in a race to finish the course. For a while, it seems like Dream is going to win, but the added factor of having PvP enabled makes things hectic, to say the least. As he crouches and backs up to the edge of where he’s standing, about to jump a Neo, George comes up from behind and punches him off the ladder.

“George! You little- when I get back up there-”

“You’re going to lose is what you’ll do,” George says.

Sapnap takes the opportunity to jump onto the same section George is on, trying to nudge him off the block.

“What are you doing? You’re going to push us both off!” George says.

George is too late to crouch, getting shoved over the edge, punching Sapnap off as he falls. The

three of them hurry back up to the start, but see Punz already there, leisurely making his way through.

<Sapnap> Punz were trying to race get your ass out of here

<Badboyhalo> language

<Punz> oh really? youre racing?

<Punz> in that case

Punz immediately picks up the pace, catching up to where they fell.

“I swear to god if Punz makes it to the finish before us...” Dream scowls.

“Okay new objective- beat Punz. Win for the boys,” Sapnap says.

Dashing through the parkour, the trio has Punz in their sights.

He looks back at them and spams his crouch button, giving a small dance before he passes the finish.

“No, no, no!” Sapnap says.

<Punz> bye bitches

<Badboyhalo> LANGUAGE

“He’s not in this call, so FUCK YOU,” Sapnap yells.

“Dude, stop saying shit like that, we’re not gonna have a video!” Dream says, laughing.

“Speaking of videos,” George says. “Dream and I technically got the farthest, so...”

“Oh, piss off. I am *not* picking through hours of footage. We all know Dream’s going to get all perfectionistic and demand he do it himself anyway,” Sapnap says.

“Hey, at least George won’t be editing it,” Dream teases.

“Let’s go find something else to do, my ego is wounded,” George says.

The boys all wander through the carnival like kids, starry-eyed, and directing their attention spans to anything that catches their eyes. It’s both exciting and relaxing, almost like being a teenager again, as silly as it is that they’re playing Minecraft. Block graphics and circumstances aside, the fun is real, and at least to Dream, it feels whole in a way that he’s missed.

Well into their day of egg-toss, merry-go-round, and whack-a-mole, Dream can tell that Sapnap is getting worn-out. He can’t blame him- he’s probably slept less in the past week than he has in a while.

"Hey, Sapnap, are you tired?" Dream asks.

"A bit. I can stay up, though," he insists.

"I know we're filming but you can go to bed if you need to," George says.

"Yeah man, you've done more than enough building everything and setting up this vacation in the first place. I'll order you some Chick-Fil-A, you take a nap, we can stay up and finish the video. You deserve it," Dream says.

Sapnap is quiet for a second.

"...Thanks, guys. You two are the best, honestly. Before I go, though, I need you to remind Wilbur to do 'the thing' for me when it turns night. He'll know what it means," Sapnap says. "Oh, and you should take the boat ride."

Dream and George share a look.

"Sure. Go get some rest," George says.

<Sapnap> im heading off to bed

<Sapnap> enjoy your night everyone

The chat scrolls past rapidly, everyone showering him with gratitude and wishing him a good night. After he leaves Teamspeak, it's only Dream and George left.

"So... boat ride?" Dream asks.

"Boat ride," George answers.

The boat ride is hard to miss.

Walking up to the entrance, the two of them crane their heads upwards at the giant colored sign reading "Tunnel of Love" above them.

"Jesus, are these even a thing anymore? I swear I've only seen these in movies," Dream says.

As cheesy as it sounds, they both hop in a boat anyway.

"It says to press the button and sit back. Well?" George asks.

Dream shrugs and presses the button. The pair are pushed onto a stream of flowing water, the boat carrying them slowly through a dim tunnel.

The scenery is something out of a storybook. Each section is a different biome, decorated with lanterns and greenery, animals strolling what little land there is.

"This is... something," Dream says.

"Definitely something," George agrees.

All sorts of jokes that he could be making run through his head, but Dream decides to keep quiet

and enjoy the ride.

They pass through a dark gateway, and on the other side is a nether-themed area. Lava lines the walls and casts a warm light on the two of them, Dream in F5 mode, taking in the whole scene.

Dream and George turn to look at each other as best they can in their current predicament, giggling softly. The boat slows to a stop, and before they know it, they're back where they came from.

Neither of them wants to get out of the boat first, so they sit there like idiots.

"That was impressive. And actually fun," Dream says.

"Yeah."

Eventually, Dream breaks the moment and hops out the boat, breaking it from beneath George.

"It's getting late. We should watch the sunset from the Ferris wheel," George says.

Dream doesn't answer, he simply returns the boat and walks ahead, stopping to wait for George.

"Let's go, then," Dream says.

When they reach the Ferris wheel, there's a ladder in the middle support beam that goes all the way to the top.

"What? He couldn't make a functioning Ferris wheel in Minecraft? I'm outraged, this is trash," Dream jokes.

Both of them reach the highest point and get into the topmost cart.

"Did you people actually make those? Functioning things in Minecraft? I saw a data pack for a Ferris wheel the other day, no joke," George says.

"No shit? That's so cool," Dream says.

"Yeah, you could pick different colors and everything. It boggles my mind how much you can do with this game," George says.

Dream wishes he could see his face right now, see that ear-to-ear smile and crinkled eyes.

"I was trying to learn more about commands since it's basically code, but there's just so much more than I ever thought was possible. Even just redstone, there are so many possibilities. I would love to do a video learning commands, or maybe redstone, and see how much we can do. I love having building blocks to put together, where there's an endless amount of outcomes. There's something so special about that- being able to do whatever you want, having the power to create anything at your fingertips," George muses.

All Dream can do is stare, fascinated, and enamored.

"I'm rambling, aren't I? I totally forgot we're filming," George says.

"Me too. It doesn't matter, we probably won't include much without Sapnap in it," Dream says.

They ease into a comfortable silence, not worried about banter or content. In theory, it would be boring to watch a sunset in a video game, especially one with pixelated graphics. However, Dream is completely content with where he is.

“I feel like we’re forgetting something,” George says.

Forgetting something?

Dream thinks about what they were doing last.

“Oh! We had to remind Wilbur to do something. Not sure what,” Dream says.

“Right, because it’s night time or something,” George says.

<Dream> hey wilbur

<WilburSoot> yeah

<Dream> sapnap said to remind you to do “the thing”

<WilburSoot> i understand

<WilburSoot> it is time

“I have no idea what that means,” Dream says.

Technoblade joined the game

“I guess that’s your answer,” George replies.

Chaos ensues in chat and Techno spawns in, already at the site of the carnival.

<Technoblade> hello fellow party people

<Technoblade> i was forced to be here

<Tommyinnit> techno! Tecno! Do your shoes need shining?? tEchno!! Should yuo need coffee? Techcno!!!

<Technoblade> anyways i hope you are having a good end of the summer

<Technoblade> this smp is full of so many awesome people

<Technoblade> at least now it is that im here

<Technoblade> well im told to pull this lever and say “smp summer 2020”

Techno walks up to a small control panel and flips a switch.

<Technoblade> so i think ive done my job

<Technoblade> have a good night everyone

Technoblade left the game

“Sapnap probably meant it to be less underwhelming than that,” Dream chuckles.

“He’s lucky Sap wasn’t here. He’ll probably get an earful tomorrow,” George replies.

Then, right as the moon rises from its resting place on the horizon, a trail of bright lights streak through the sky. It’s followed by a series of brightly colored explosions- sparkles, creeper faces, and stars, cascading through the stars on a canvas of night.

“Wow,” George says. “It’s...”

“Beautiful. It’s pretty damn beautiful,” Dream replies.

The sparkling fireworks illuminate the pair seated next to each other, bathing them in bright neon hues. They don’t say words, and they don’t need to.

Dream wishes he could see George’s face even more.

“Can’t believe summer is already over. Halloween is just around the corner, then it’s Christmas, and before you know it, the year is over,” George says.

“I can’t believe this year happened in the first place. I remember hitting one million and thinking about the long, long road ahead. It’s hard to believe we’re already well onto that road. More than I ever thought possible has happened this year,” Dream says.

George turns to him, a blue and green burst casting its light on his face.

“What’s the most unbelievable thing about 2020, do you think?” he asks.

Dream looks out onto the carnival grounds, his friends all clowning around and playing games under the starry sky. He looks back to George, watching him move slightly, imagining George fidgeting in his gaming chair, trying to keep his hand steady in anticipation.

The most unbelievable thing?

Getting to love my best friend.

“Maybe... getting to become closer with you,” Dream says.

He waits for George’s response, afraid he pushed too much, went too risky.

George only gives a soft laugh under his breath and moves closer, turning to watch the last of the fireworks together.

“I like that,” George says.

It'll Be Worth Your While

Chapter Notes

TW: Panic Attack Mention

You know what? Sapnap's friends were right. That was the best sleep he's had in days.

As fun as it was to host such a huge event with so many people, at the end of the day, it drains his batteries. Sapnap indulges in a lazy afternoon, not getting out of bed until the sun is lounging far up in the sky on a bed of orange-tinted clouds.

He's laying sideways, throwing a tennis ball against the wall with an R&B oldies playlist in his earphones. Next to him, his phone vibrates with a notification.

Dream

hey guys

Sapnap

ay yo whats up

george

yeah?

Dream

we should divy up the vacation footage

I wanna get these videos up soon

Sapnap

you mean split it 50/50 right

we aint giving that shit to george

its supposed to be summer of 2020 not summer of 2021

george

youre SO funny

oh my god guys this SENT me!! crying laughing emoji!!!

Dream

okay seriously

I want to save the first day karaoke for the team channel just as an extra fun bit

idk if its like full episode worthy

and we haven't uploaded there in months

so its just the scavenger hunt, capture the flag, and the carnival

Sapnap

the carnival is my baby i dont trust you two with it

i need to infuse it with the old dream team vibes

In the wake of that message, seconds later Sapnap gets a Twitter DM from George.

George

@GeorgeNootFound

< im using twitter instead of discord so i dont accidentally open the wrong dm or something

< but can you please let me do the carnival

what why >

< because

come on dude i really want that vid for my channel >

< after you left

< listen

< just let me do it

no hold up now im interested >

< oh my god

< if i tell you will you give me the video

fine >

< so

< dream and i

< at the end when we were watching the fireworks

< we just forgot we were even filming

< and we were just talking

< and it was nice

< and kind of sweet

< and i just

< i dont want anyone to see it

< i wanted it to be just for us

Sapnap understands, but that doesn't make him any less salty over handing their best video to George. So, he decides to tease him a bit. He scrolls through his gallery and sends a screencap of Tubbo whispering "this is deffo flirting."

< fuck off

never baby <3 >

< will you let me do it?

ok fine >

BUT >

only because i dont wanna sit through you two making goo goo eyes at each other >

and you better include my cool fireworks i dont care if you gotta mute it >

< oh my god thank you

< i will

It would be really easy to be a jerk and poke fun, and at any other time, he would have. However, Sapnap knows that George probably struggled to even open Twitter today, so he decides to behave himself and give the guy a break.

No one on the planet wants Dream and George to figure their shit out more than he does, but for now, it would be better to let things happen naturally. But god, if it doesn't make Sapnap want to bash their heads in sometimes.

He opens Discord again to check the group chat.

Dream

okay that works

I dont have a preference either way so its up to George

hello

did you both die

Sapnap

sorry i was checking smth

i changed my mind btw ill do capture the flag

i wanna do the pvp scenes and stuff

Dream

okay?

George how about you

george

i can do the carnival one

Dream

then Im set with scavenger hunt

we can hopefully get the footage to each other by tonight

I want us to post them in order

Sapnap

georgie is posting his video last?

good

that gives this slacker some extra time then

george

can you go five seconds without teasing me

we get it im lazy

it wasnt funny the first ten times

Dream

play nice, boys

Sapnap

i woodent aff too if yew did yow dam job gowgy

george

alright that was just not funny at all

Sapnap

awloait thaht wuz just nawt funnay attawl

george

--

Sapnap

it was pretty funny

Dream

leave George alone Sap its not his fault he was born inferior

george

your moms inferior

Sapnap

not last night she wasnt

Dream

pfft

okay, that was funny

george

aw hes learning comedy

youll make it to stand up one day, kid, dont worry

Sapnap

the only place ill be standing is on the crafting bench at your moms house

Dream

GUYS

VIDEOS

Sapnap

fine

ill get my pov to you both

george

yeah alright

Dream

real productive team meeting guys

five entire minutes just to decide whos taking on what video

george

you dont get to talk

the other day our brainstorming session lasted a whole 2 seconds because you couldnt stop laughing over tweets about your ass being fat

Sapnap

i mean

for all we know they could be right

does shawty indeed got the fatty

Dream

oh my god

Sapnap

forget the face reveal wheres the ass reveal

george next time you get up close and personal you better snap a pic

the world needs answers

george

SAPNAP

Dream

you two are ridiculous

im going to get some work done

ill start putting together the footage as soon as I get it

catch you both later

Sapnap

peace

george

bye

Having decided he's relaxed for long enough, Sapnap figures it's time to get off his ass. Right as he's making his way to his PC, he gets a DM from Dream.

Dream

Nick

can you talk

Sapnap

in general or

Dream

on the phone you moron

He's not sure what to expect- the use of his name gives him a sense of urgency that's off-putting, but he calls him anyway.

"Aren't you supposed to be working on something?" Sapnap asks

"Listen, man. I really need to get this off my chest," Dream says. "It's... about George."

"It always is," Sapnap sighs.

Dream ignores his remark.

"I don't know what got a hold of me last night, I was just being so... sincere. And flirty. And *gross*. The thing is- he was reciprocating! But I have no idea how to know if he's flirting or *flirting*. Half the shit he says to me could be interpreted as romantic, how the fuck am I supposed to tell the difference?" Dream says all in one breath.

Sapnap is close to smashing his face into his phone.

"Dream. *Dream*. Let's start with the basics and work from there because you seriously need to get this out of the way. Yes or no, do you have feelings for him?" Sapnap asks, point-blank.

He hears Dream inhale sharply, and think about his response.

Being patient, he gives him the time he needs.

"...I do," Dream finally says.

"Okay. That's a start. Now, do you think he returns those feelings?" Sapnap asks.

"I have no fucking idea!" Dream replies.

"Hey, no, focus up. This is just like any other problem- you're cornered on half health against three people in full iron? Use that same process, that same part of your brain. You don't know if he feels the same. So? How do we find out?" Sapnap asks.

Dream pauses for a minute, audibly slowing his breathing.

"I can either ask him up front, which, no, I would rather die a painful death. Or, I could keep pushing further and possibly ruin our friendship forever," Dream says.

"Listen to yourself, man. Ruining your friendship forever? We both know that's not happening. Also, why is asking him such a bad option? I mean, you don't have to worry about him being straight," Sapnap says. That earns him a judging silence. "Too soon? Too soon."

"I'm trying to go through my deductive process but it's all... Fucked up with emotions. I can't look at anything objectively because this stupid British motherfucker is fucking with my fucking brain! Fuck!" Dream yells.

Cursing repeatedly in one sentence, losing his train of thought, *and* jumping to worst possible scenarios? This is quickly turning into a doomsday-level Dream spiral.

"Wow, you've lost your composure? I couldn't tell," Sapnap says sarcastically.

"You know what the worst part is? I still have plane tickets to England. I got them on a whim a while ago because we wanted to say 'fuck it' and plan a trip, but now everything is all fucked. And you know what? Part of me actually considered going anyway," Dream says.

"Good. Go," Sapnap replies.

Dream stops, not expecting that.

"Go? Should I? Should I just... go see him?" Dream asks.

"Dream. Dude. I'm going to tell you the most important thing I can tell you right now," Sapnap says. He pauses for effect and leans in close to his phone. "You. Think. Too. Much."

"Sapnap?" Dream asks.

"Yeah, man?" He asks back.

Dream exhales slowly.

"Thank you. I needed that," Dream says.

"Good, because I was getting tired of your teenage girl schtick. You're a smart dude, you'll figure it out. In the meantime, I'm going to go get some air or something. I haven't left the house all week," Sapnap says.

"Thanks again. I feel like I would have gone insane without you a long time ago. You have very powerful anti-Dream-freakout abilities. Go have fun, Sap," Dream says.

"Bye, dude," Sapnap says.

He hangs up and opens his IRL friend group chat. Despite it being a last-minute invitation, he manages to get some friends together for a game of soccer in the park.

Before leaving, he compiles his footage from the vacation and sends the respective recordings off to Dream and George. It would be in his best interests not to procrastinate, especially considering that his friends don't need the stress right now.

After everything is set, Sapnap throws on some gym shorts and fishes a Houston Rockets hoodie

out of a pile of clothes he assumes is clean. While he's tying his sneakers, he gets a call from George.

He answers, wedging the phone against his shoulder.

"Hey, George, I'm about to go out right now. This isn't the best time-"

He's immediately caught off guard by the sound of George shakily breathing. Sapnap drops everything he's doing and holds the phone to his ear.

"Hello? What's wrong, are you okay?" Sapnap asks.

George lets out a snuffle, clearing his throat.

"I- I don't know. Something weird just... some weird wave of something just came over me. I wasn't even doing anything, I just got the footage you sent and thought I should start working. I was watching through my recording of me and Dream," George says between gasps. "It all just hit me out of nowhere- that it would take one slip up to mess everything up, that I took a chance on coming out and now everyone knows, and he knows, and he might know everything, and there's nothing I can do."

Trying not to lose his cool, Sapnap works out how to approach this in his head.

"George, I'm right here. Breathe in, breathe out. I'm right here, you're on the phone with me, and the sky is brown," Sapnap says.

The steady sniffing sounds are halted.

"Wh- Did you- Did you say the sky is brown? That's- That's so stupid," George says with the smallest chuckle.

"Okay, so what color is it, then?" Sapnap asks.

"It's blue. It's obviously blue," George replies.

"Good, what color is grass?" Sapnap asks.

"Green. Grass is green," George says.

"What time is it?" Sapnap asks.

"It's... 8:30," George says.

"Good," Sapnap says.

By now, George has calmed down significantly. There's a quiet shuffling of sheets, and Sapnap assumes he's getting under the covers.

"I'm safe," George says under his breath.

Sapnap waits for his breathing to steady before pressing any further.

"Do you wanna walk me through what happened?" He asks cautiously.

"Nothing happened. It came out of nowhere. I don't know what just happened, I felt like... like I was dying," George whispers.

"I think that was a panic attack, dude," Sapnap says.

George lets out a barely audible "oh."

"I read somewhere once that when someone's panicking, you gotta like... ground them. Remind them where they are," Sapnap says. "Do you wanna talk about it or just move on?"

There's a loud, unsteady sigh.

"It was just thoughts. I keep thinking about every bad thing that's happened in just the last few days. I thought that maybe... maybe the embarrassment would go away after a while. What's the point in being honest if you don't stop feeling guilty and shameful?"

"What's the point in taking the first step of a marathon if you have to take a thousand steps more?" Sapnap asks. He can practically hear George rolls his eyes at that.

"It should be easy in theory. People are walking around proudly every day. It feels humiliating inside to... feel like this about him. I don't know how to not beat myself up over that," George says.

"I don't think I have the answer to all your problems here, man. I don't think there *are* answers. Maybe just keep trying, and one day you'll be able to look back on this and be like 'what a fucking idiot,' because of how good things are," Sapnap offers.

"Maybe. It's hard not to listen to the part of me saying that will never happen," George says.

"We can test that. Pull up a voice recorder and turn off your brain for a second. No thoughts, head empty," Sapnap says. He chuckles at that. "What do you hear? What do you see?"

George hums gently for a few moments.

"There's streetlights with moths around them. There's a petrol station down over that way. I hear my neighbor's TV and my dog snoring. It's... it's peaceful," George says.

"Good. That's good. How do you feel?" Sapnap asks.

"Stuck. Confused. But... hopeful," George answers.

"Okay, save that recording. In the future, when you think about how awesome life is going, play it," Sapnap says.

On the other line, George is quiet, lost in thought.

"Wait, weren't you supposed to go out? Shit, I'm sorry did I make you late?" George asks.

"Don't worry about it. This is more important," Sapnap responds.

George groans in frustration.

"Out of the two of you, why did I have to fall for the competitive, bratty Florida man?" George asks.

"I think you fell for the right guy. Trust me," Sapnap says.

His phone is blowing up with notifications from his buddies, so he sends them a quick explanation, and puts the phone back to his ear.

"My advice to you? Stick it out," Sapnap says.

"Wh- what?" George asks.

"Stick it out? Like, stay in it for the long run? Keep at it?" Sapnap says.

"Oh. Right, American saying. Yeah, I'll... stick it out," George says.

"I think it'll be worth your while," Sapnap says.

"You know what?" George says more confidently. "Me too."

"Yeah-hah, that's the spirit. Best case scenario? You get to date a competitive, bratty Florida man. Worst case scenario? He doesn't feel the same way. I have a feeling you don't have to worry about that though," he assures him.

"Sapnap? You're just- you're awesome," George says.

"I know," Sapnap replies with a wink. "You didn't see it, but I just winked."

George laughs.

"I'm going to bed early. Thank you, as per usual," he says.

"No problem, my guy. You take care of yourself. Remember to stop remembering shit," Sapnap says.

"I will. Bye, Sap," George says.

"Later."

Sapnap lays back and stretches out, emotionally drained for the day. He figures it would be best to stay in, and reluctantly shoots his friends an apologetic text. They're understanding about it, and end up going to play without him.

To get his mind off of the emotional whiplash, he turns on his TV and puts on the first show that he sees. The worry lingers in his mind, and it takes a while for the rush of concern to leave his system. Even though he'd do it every day if he had to, the toll of talking someone down is taxing.

"One day they'll fuck it out and let me rest," Sapnap mutters to himself over the TV. "God, I hope it's soon."

This Was Enough of a Dream

George spends the oncoming days recovering from his bout of panic, thankful that he decided to go on a break earlier. Contrary to his friends' jokes, he puts the finishing touches on his video, so he and the team get them up one day after the other.

The positive feedback from the vacation specials gives him a small boost of confidence in his quiet isolation. Most of his time recently has been spent taking a break from Minecraft, rekindling his love for other video games.

He's in his Stardew Valley world in the middle of winter, day sixteen, when he gets bored of waiting for the season to end. George looks through his socials idly, checking Instagram first.

Dream has an Instagram story up? Interesting. He taps on it curiously.

It's a picture of Patches on his bed yawning. The caption reads, "Lazy weekend," with stickers and gifs around it. The cat is a pleasant source of serotonin. It's a surprise that Dream is awake, considering it must be early for him.

He returns to his steam library, scrolling through for something to occupy his time. Almost every game has a significant number of hours on it, so he figures he could ask Dream for a recommendation. George shoots him a text.

george

my steam library is getting stale

have you played any cool indie games recently?

Scrolling through the store for twenty minutes, he comes up with nothing and looks back to Discord. Dream hasn't responded to his message.

Is it clingy to ask why he's not responding? That's clingy.

George asks Sapnap instead, and after much convincing, gives League of Legends a chance.

"I don't get this! Why do I need to go in the bottom lane, again? I want to go explore," George asks.

"No, you're playing support. I'm playing jungle, so I'm the one who explores," Sapnap says.

"Let's switch, then," George says.

"We can't *switch*. I'm Lee Sin, you're playing Lux. You have to stay in bottom lane and support your ADC. I can come help gank bot if you do bad in your trading phase, but until then, you just need to farm and push enemy turret," Sapnap says, in what George can't imagine is English.

His eyes start spinning in his head, and he ends up dying in a matter of seconds.

"I... died," George says.

“Yeah, I can see that. Jesus, George, we’re playing against bots,” Sapnap says.

“This game is dumb! How are you supposed to know all of this?!” George complains.

Sapnap sighs.

“The learning curve is crazy. It took me years to get good, don’t throw a fit. You wanna play something else, man?” he asks.

“No, not really,” George says. “I was really just looking for something to kill time. When I have actual work to do, there’s always a game I wish I were playing. Now I’m bored of everything,” George says, resting his face on his fist.

“If you’re looking for something fun and chill, I don’t think I have any games for you,” Sapnap admits with a laugh.

“You know what? I’m actually going to get some food. Want to facetime?” George asks.

“Sure ‘thang,” Sapnap replies.

They quit the awful, devil game and George gathers his house keys and wallet. He calls Sapnap as he exits the door, giving his dog a head scratch on the way out.

“Aw, George, you look so cute with your little mask on your little scooter,” Sapnap teases.

“Shut up. You’re just jealous I can nyoom around, *and* it’s electric,” George says.

“You realize you’re making it sound nerdier, right?” Sapnap asks.

“Whatever. I’m going into town for some pizza, I think,” George says.

He checks google maps for a nearby Hut. Contentedly folding up his scooter when he goes in to order. As he’s waiting for his pizza, he nervously chews on his lip, thinking about how to ask his next question without sounding clingy.

“Have you talked to Dream today? He hasn’t responded to me yet,” George says.

He stays quiet.

“Hello? Sapnap?” George asks.

“Oh, uh... no. I, um, wouldn’t worry about it,” Sapnap says.

That’s not suspicious.

“I know he’s the worst at messaging people back. Maybe I got used to him spoiling me with early texts,” George says.

“He once left me on read for three days, and then responded, at two in the morning, ‘k.’ JUST K. You have it pretty good, dude,” Sapnap says. George is still suspect, but he shrugs it off as Sap being Sap.

“Oh wait, my pizza’s ready,” George says. He thanks the man at the register with a polite nod.

“Holy shit, George, is that an entire ass pizza?” Sapnap asks.

“What? I’m a growing boy,” George says.

“Yeah, we know you’re a grower, not a shower,” Sapnap laughs.

George snorts and starts back towards his house. As he’s setting the box on the counter, he gets a text notification.

Dream

< come here

< now

He sends an address—an address in England. George narrowly avoids tripping over his couch.

what? >

what do you mean come here >

< I mean come here

< dont be late

He puts the address into his phone, and the results bring up a nearby airport. All he can do is stare at his phone.

“George, you there?” Sapnap asks.

“Yeah, I...”

Come here.

“Sapnap, I have to go. I’ll talk to you later,” George says.

In a rush, he calls an uber, apologizing to his dog for leaving again. He gets a sad lick in response and makes himself a reminder to get more treats after he’s done with... whatever is happening.

He almost forgot to put on his mask, stumbling into his uber.

“Hi. Going to the airport, big plans?” his driver asks with a smile.

“I have no idea,” George says honestly.

“Sounds like an adventure,” she chuckles.

And Dream is my destination.

George kicks himself.

That's so cheesy.

He refreshes his twitter timeline, needing something to keep his eyes on. That, coupled with his nerves, makes him car-sick fast, so he's left with the sights outside of the car window.

The patchwork of city and lush overgrowth by the road doesn't help his current state much. George is indebted to his uber driver, who hasn't made any further attempts at conversation. He thanks her by not saying anything either.

The drive is grueling, but finally, they arrive.

"What gate should I drop you at?" the driver asks.

"I'm not quite sure. This entrance is fine," George answers.

"Well, then, good luck with your adventure. I hope you find what you're looking for," she says.

He leaves the car with the smallest wave. Pulling out his phone, he snaps a picture of the airport sign out front and sends it to Dream. People around him stare, so George heads inside and makes for the restaurants, if only not to look like an utter weirdo standing around blocking the way.

Dream sends back a picture of a seating area near a gift shop. In the image, George can see the high-tops he's wearing at the bottom.

At least I'll know how to tell him from the crowd.

The gift shop from the picture is to his left, so he traverses through the crowd of masked strangers. George is gripping his phone like a teen navigating the sea of faces at a party with a red solo cup in hand.

He reaches the shop and looks around, whipping his head in circles in what must look like a hilarious display.

What if this won't be what I'm expecting? What if it's awkward? What if I won't even know it's him?

That last one sticks with him especially. Sure, George has seen pictures, and yes, he's been on a video call with him. But now that he's going to meet him, he can't manage to wrack his brain for a clear image of what Dream looks like.

Scanning the people surrounding him, George searches for a possible Dream candidate. He repeats the description of him in his mind over and over.

Tall, green eyes, dirty blonde hair, fit, chiseled jawline, handsome-

George stops that train of thought. That's precisely the kind of thing he *doesn't* want to be thinking while he's meeting him for the first time. It would be so easy to slip up and ruin everything; it would only take one moment for their friendship to be over. This could go so wrong in so many ways, and what would he do then?

"Hey."

He whips his head around to look at the hand on his shoulder.

"What are the chances I see you here?" Dream asks.

Dream asks.

George is frozen in place.

“Dream,” George says. It’s not a question or a statement. He says it because he can, and he’s there, and it feels fitting. It feels *right*.

Dream looks at him with a dopey grin.

“George,” he says back.

“It’s- it’s you,” George stutters.

“Yeah. It is,” Dream chuckles.

“You’re here- you- you’re actually here,” George says.

“Don’t look so worried, jeez. I had to get tested before I came, it came back negative, so don’t get your panties in a bunch,” Dream says.

“It’s not that! I just- This doesn’t feel real, is all. I didn’t think I’d be seeing you today, in person,” George says, laughing nervously.

“So,” Dream says, gesturing to his face. “What’s the consensus? Am I everything you’ve hoped for?”

Yes.

“You’re, well...” George starts.

He looks simultaneously just as he remembered him, and not at all as he pictured him. Video calls did no justice to how his hair appears in real life, his dark roots and sunkissed tips that catch the light like gold. Pictures couldn’t have captured his skin, the rose of his cheeks, the subtle tan line peeking out from his collar. His shoulders are broad, and he’s got a hand in his pocket. His eyes can’t possibly be this green. It’s not possible that he’s-

“Wow, you’re pretty ugly,” George says.

He laughs his ridiculous, wheezing laugh, and it’s the most breathtaking thing George has ever seen. The sight of Dream’s eyes crinkling, eyebrows knit together, corners of his lips pulling upwards is everything. It makes him flash through every time George has heard his laugh, that he couldn’t have imagined he was missing this behind the screen.

“Didn’t know I left the kettle on,” George teases.

“Kettle? Oh god, I’m really in England, aren’t I?” Dream chuckles.

George just now arrives back in the present and realizes they’re standing in the middle of an airport dining area.

“You’re not afraid someone’s going to recognize you?” George asks.

Dream shrugs.

“I’m kind of not worried about anything else now that I’m actually here with you,” he says.

Don't say anything stupid, don't say anything stupid, don't say anything stupid.

"Pogchamp," George says, stupidly.

He wants to melt into the floor.

"Hah, pogchamp indeed," Dream says

"Sorry, I'm just- you're just here, and you haven't told me anything. When did you arrive? How long are you going to be here? Where are you staying? You literally posted a picture of Patches hours ago, so just generally, what the fuck?" George asks, all in one breath.

"I arrived when I texted you, I'm leaving tomorrow morning, and I'm staying in a hotel. Oh, also, I gave Sapnap my Instagram and a picture of Patches before I left," Dream replies.

"Wait, Sapnap knew about this?" George almost shouts.

The people passing around them start to stare.

"Let's maybe go somewhere else. Somewhere not in the middle of a public airport," Dream says.

"Yeah, that's probably a good idea," George says.

"Hungry?" Dream asks.

"I picked up a pizza before I got here. It's probably gone cold already," George replies.

"That's fine. I like it microwaved," Dream says.

"That's disgusting. Don't make me send you back," George says.

"You wouldn't. You like me too much," Dream laughs.

Yeah. That's the problem.

They get an uber back, Dream insisting he pays.

"You don't need to pay. You're basically a guest here," George says.

"Well, I want to. Besides, I don't want to make it an issue of subscriber count, but-"

"Oh, what a humble gentleman. We get it, you're rich, Clay," George says.

There's an almost imperceptible moment of Dream looking taken aback, but he recovers quickly.

"Don't hate the player, George," he says. "Should we take a picture for Twitter? I feel like fucking with people. This is the best opportunity I'm ever gonna get."

"They haven't had enough, huh? You're evil, you know that?" George asks.

"Yep."

He pulls out his phone and opens the front-facing camera. Lining up the shot, he makes sure to include only his shoulder, right next to George's face.

"You have to make a face, dude," Dream insists.

He sighs and strikes a cute pose, chin resting on his hands and looking up towards the ceiling with a smile.

“Perfect. What should the caption be?” Dream asks.

“No caption.”

Dream shoots him an exaggerated gasp.

“The student becomes the teacher,” he whispers.

The two of them fall into an easy conversation, and it’s just like it always is. Despite the added challenge of having to look straight into his radiant, green eyes that he could drown in and never go up for air, George thinks he’s faring pretty well.

He and Dream make it back to his place, and they’re immediately greeted by his dog.

“Okay, I’m going to be really honest right now. I only flew here to meet Dog.”

“You know her name, why are you calling her Dog?” George asks.

“Because it’s funny. Look. C’ mere Dog!”

She bounds over and curiously sniffs at his shoes. Dream crouches down and scratches behind her ear, and she gives him a lick in response, deciding she likes him.

“Be careful, George. She might like me better,” he says.

George rolls his eyes and picks the pizza box up from the counter.

“Want to split it half and half?” George asks.

“Sure. Why did you let it get cold?” Dream asks.

“When you texted me, I just- well- left,” George replies.

Dream leans against the counter, watching him stick a plate in the microwave.

“Wow, you dropped everything just to come see me? What a simp,” he teases.

“Says the guy who bought a plane ticket across to another country just to see *me*,” George says.

“Hey, you talked me into it. Can’t wait to see this beach I’ve heard so much about,” Dream says.

“Food first.”

Something is comforting about eating microwaved pizza, as awful as it is. Both of them talk about whatever comes to mind, still adjusting to seeing each other’s faces in the real world. Dream pokes around his kitchen, teasing his empty spice cabinet and marvelling at the sheer amount of apple juice in his fridge.

Despite that, he pours himself a glass anyway. Idly chewing a slice of unevenly reheated pizza, Dream scrolls through his Twitter feed, excited to see responses.

“I thought Twitter would be freaking out more than this,” Dream says disappointedly.

“Maybe they don’t believe us. Is there anything a little more convincing we can show? Stir the pot

more?” George asks.

“You’re evil! You’re actually evil,” Dream says.

He pauses to think, then starts rummaging through his suitcase.

“...I have this green bracelet that a fan gave me. Maybe I could happen to leave one of my hands in a picture. Maybe I could... I don’t know, *happen* to post a picture of your dog?”

“And you call *me* evil,” George says.

Dream calls her, patting on his leg. Dog walks over happily, sitting down at his feet. He snaps a picture while he pets her on the head.

“Nice. I’m captioning it ‘think I might steal her.’ And... Perfect! Let’s hit the pier, then?” he says.

“Sure,” George replies. “Should I bring swim trunks, or..?”

“And not be spontaneous? It’s our mini-vacation, why don’t we live a little?” Dream says.

Making the most of the lovely day, they take another Uber to a few blocks from the beach. It’s a ways away, but they enjoy taking the scenic route. Neither of them has a plan, but that makes it all the more fun.

There aren’t too many people, enough to call a crowd but not enough to be overwhelming. He and Dream have space to be themselves and have fun, and that’s all he could’ve asked for.

“You’re a native, why don’t you give me the tour?” Dream asks.

George realizes he doesn’t actually know much about the history of this place. He pulls his phone out his pocket, just enough for him to see.

“Um... did you know the Palace Pier was intended as a replacement for the Chain Pier, which collapsed in 1896 during construction?” George asks.

His phone gets snatched out of his hand.

“No, but neither did you. Wikipedia, George? Come on,” Dream chastises.

“Well, I know that the place caught fire some years ago. They think it was arson,” George says.

“It’s funny, but I’m so used to playing Minecraft with pyromaniacs that the word arson holds no meaning anymore. The first thing that popped into my mind was genuinely: ‘arson? Cool,’” Dream laughs.

“I also know that this is probably the most touristy place ever. I can’t imagine it’s much better than, say, Hollywood or something,” George says.

“Jesus, *Hollywood*? You’re really not selling this place,” Dream says.

They both arrive and see a sign saying that the pier is at capacity, only taking online reservations. Bummer.

“Doesn’t matter anyway. So much for not planning,” George says.

“Aw, man. I wanted to go to the arcade and copy Tommy. Did you see his views on that vlog?”

Dream jokes.

“I think if I posted a vlog now, no one would watch the damn thing,” George says.

That earns him a wheeze. The sun is beating down on them, reflecting off the water. Wiping his brow, Dream pulls his jacket off and drapes it over his shoulder. He scans the area for something to do. Eventually, he points in the direction of an ice cream stand.

“I say, we get popsicles and take to the beach, yeah?” Dream asks.

“Okay, but you have to order and ask for an ice lolly. It’s just proper,” George says.

“You’re so annoying.”

The person at the stand looks bewildered by the sound of “ice lolly” in an American accent and looks unable to hold in a laugh. Neither can George, as Dream slides a dollar bill across the counter and it gets promptly handed back to him. Taking pity, George pulls out his own wallet and hands over a banknote with an apology.

“That was so embarrassing,” Dream mutters afterwards. He has a hand over his face, taking shameful licks of his ice cream, which he’s stuck behind his mask.

George holds his between his teeth and leans down to roll up his jeans and kick off his shoes.

“What are you doing?” Dream asks.

“Being spontaneous.”

Leaving his socks tucked into his sneakers, he walks over to the slow-rising tide and lets the water wash over his feet. It’s cold, but inviting all the same. Dream jogs over to meet him, immediately backing away when he touches the water.

“Fuck, that’s freezing,” he hisses.

“That’s the Atlantic, for you,” George says.

“Florida is in the Atlantic too, dumbass,” Dream replies.

George kicks water at him. Dream tosses a pebble back. It eventually becomes a full-on fight, the two of them chasing each other in circles and yelling, throwing rocks and splashing the other. Running out into the water, Dream goes waist-deep into the ocean, teeth chattering from the cold.

“Come and get me!” He shouts.

Pushed forward by a surge of boldness, or perhaps stupidity, George runs straight for him and tries to tackle him. Dream is more steady on his feet than he anticipated, so it ends up feeling like hitting a brick wall, and he ends up face-first into the water.

“So much for social distancing, I guess,” Dream chuckles. He offers a hand to George, who’s on the ground, completely soaked.

“There goes my ice lolly,” George pouts.

Dream pulls him up and offers his ice cream.

“Take mine.”

“No, it’s got all your... spit on it,” George says.

“What, you afraid of having my spit in your mouth?”

George scrunches up his face at that. Dream opens his mouth as if to apologize, but ends up closing it again.

“Yeah, maybe not,” George says.

The air growing tense, they walk along the beach in silence. Usually, these sorts of jokes are glossed over, and everything returns to normal. Now, there’s something different about seeing one another in person. He has to face him where there’s no computer screen to hide the blush that’s threatening to spread over his face. It feels new; it feels vulnerable.

Dream suddenly stops, turning to look at the horizon. He digs his toes into the pebbles and crouches down, the low tide now barely reaching for his feet. George timidly walks over, crouching down next to him.

“I missed this. I used to go to the beach so much as a kid,” Dream muses.

The sound of creaking rollercoasters and crashing waves in the distance create a harmony of peaceful white noise. They sit kneeling on the rocky shore, drenched in saltwater and backlit by the afternoon sun.

“The vacation videos are doing great, by the way. Thank you for the footage from the karaoke night, I forgot that I... wasn’t there for much of it,” Dream says. “We never really talked, we kind of slapped a band-aid on it and moved on. I’m sorry. Really.”

George turns to him, searching his face as he stares out into the beyond.

“We talked enough. I heard what I needed to hear. I’m not gonna let something stupid like that come between us,” George says.

He scoots closer, testing the waters. When Dream doesn’t immediately move away, he rests his head on his shoulder, his touch featherlight and apprehensive. The moment is tender, and George tries to drink in every detail and commit the scene to memory. Dream’s wind-tossed hair, the smell of salt, his clothes freezing cold and sopping wet against his skin. He wants to remember this forever, content to see the world end so long as he has this moment.

“Do you want to stay at my hotel? Get away for the night? We could watch a movie, stay up late,” Dream offers.

George almost loses his balance.

“I don’t know, I don’t like leaving my dog home alone for too long,” he says.

“I got a pet-friendly hotel. I know you, dude,” Dream replies.

Unable to find another excuse, George just shakes his head.

“Alright. I figure it’s about time to get going,” Dream says.

He doesn’t want this to be over. He doesn’t want the spell to break. He can’t risk going back to a world where they’re not sitting at the edge of the country, needing nothing but the other’s company.

“Yeah, let’s go,” George says.

Gathering themselves up, they make back towards the city with their shoes and socks in hand. In the uber home, they steal glances from each other like a game of chicken, seeing who can catch the other staring the longest. It makes him feel like a kid- like the thrilling adventure of meeting someone’s eyes from across a classroom.

At his house, they awkwardly stand in the doorway, unsure of how to end the night.

“This was fun. I go to the pier often, but this was different. I liked it,” George says.

“You make for a good tour guide,” Dream laughs.

He’s standing so close, it would be so easy to just lean in and-

George’s heart starts racing, and his hands begin to shake.

“I- um- good night, Dream. I’m gonna... go,” he stammers. George hurries inside and closes the door behind him.

He waits for the sound of Dream’s footsteps receding and sinks to the floor. The wave of fear pools in his chest, and he has to remind himself how to breathe. George does what he does in any situation like this and texts Sapnap.

Ride or Die <3

we are talking later about you conspiring to surprise me >

but i need help >

< i dont know what you could ever be talking about ;)

< and whats up

we came back from the beach >

and dream was saying goodbye before going back to his hotel >

< wait instead of just going straight to his hotel

< he went home with you and got ANOTHER car after?

what >

yeah i guess >

why does that matter >

< its just

< inchresting

anyways >

we were standing in my doorway and he was just looking at me >

and i got the sudden urge to kiss him >

< well did you

NO >

thats the thing okay >

ive never looked at another guy and wanted to kiss him before >

i started spiraling into the same shame and embarrassment >

all day i was thinking about how good he looked and immediately beating myself up over it >

the moment i looked at his jawline too long or thought about the size of his hands >

it was all big red alarms >

i want to be able to have normal feelings without hating myself for it >

< georgie

< theres no normal feelings

< stop listening to your brain

< if you wanna kiss him shut up and kiss him

< if dream doesnt want to thats fine

< but dont let your own dumbass be the one preventing that

if i kiss him and he didnt want it how is that fine >

< because then you have a definite answer

< its not often in your life that you get those

youre right >

he doesnt exactly give the clearest signals though >

he invited me to his hotel room too >

like what is that supposed to mean >

< gogy you absolute fucking idiot nimrod

< what do you think “come to my hotel room” means

oh my god he didnt say it like that >

he asked if i wanted to sleep over and watch a movie >

< ARE YOU BRAINDEAD

even if i wanted to go what would i do >

text him and say i changed my mind? >

< im gonna bludgeon your head in

< youre such a chick jesus christ

fine >

you know what im texting him right now >

< good

< go get some georgie

thats enough out of you >

George opens his and Dream's messages and types in a text, hyping himself up to send it.

Dream

what kind of popcorn do you like? >

< any, so long as you're bringing it

Changing out of his soaking wet clothes and throwing together a go-bag, he rummages through his kitchen cabinet and pulls out a bag of popcorn kernels. Dream sends him the address, and George decides to take his scooter to the hotel, seeing as it's not too far.

When he enters the main lobby, Dream is waiting for him. George sits down next to him on a couch to fold up his scooter.

"Hi," Dream says.

"Hello," George says.

Dream offers to carry his things, and they walk to the elevator. Plain muzak plays over the speakers as he smiles nervously at the floor. He's led to Dream's room, sitting on the edge of the bed like he's at a stranger's house.

"I brought an HDMI cable, so I can hook up my laptop. Got a movie request?" Dream asks.

"I'm fine with whatever," George says.

He scrolls mindlessly through Netflix for a while, George taking the opportunity to evaluate his recommended page.

"Why are there so many documentaries on your front page?" George says.

"What? I like learning. Documentaries are versatile," Dream says.

“What National Geographic exclusive are we watching then, Dream?” George asks.

“Nah, not Nat Geo. I’ve been binging this series called Explained. It’s pretty interesting,” he replies.

“Well, then. I’d like some explanations.”

Dream chuckles, pulling up the title while George sticks the bag of kernels in the microwave.

“Do you know the perfect popcorn trick?” Dream asks.

“What’s the perfect popcorn trick?”

He walks over behind George and peeks over his shoulder.

“The moment you start to hear the popping start to slow down, you take the bag out and let it cool down for a few seconds. Then, you mix in a little hot sauce and then put it back in until the rest of it pops. It’s perfect every time, no cap,” Dream says.

“That sounds dumb, but whatever you say, magical popcorn emperor. Where are we even going to get hot sauce this late?” George asks sardonically.

“I... I have some.”

“Dream- *Why did you pack hot sauce?*” George asks.

“I like my food spicy! I didn’t think most of the food here would have hot sauce, I don’t know!” Dream explains.

“You’re in England, not a third-world country! Even third-world countries have hot sauce!” George says.

“Okay, you guys aren’t exactly known for having the spiciest and most flavorful food,” Dream says back.

“Whatever. Go consult your hot sauce reserves, filthy American, with your oversaturated palette,” George says with a huff.

“I don’t think you even believe any of the words you just said. We just ate reheated pizza, dude,” Dream laughs.

He returns brandishing the tiniest bottle of sriracha George has ever seen. The sound of popping begins to slow, so Dream stops the microwave. Opening the bag slightly, he waits for the steam to billow out and pours in a fair amount of hot sauce. With that, he mixes the contents around, then closes it back up, giving it a good shake.

“It’s all in the technique, George. There’s a tenuous balance between spicy and soggy, crunchy and evenly cooked. I’ve mastered my form over a span of decades,” Dream says in an over-the-top voice.

He rolls up the edge that’s been opened and leans the bag on that side, sticking it back in for a minute longer. After the rest of the kernels pop, he takes it out and opens the bag with a flourish.

“Wow. It’s truly astonishing how dumb you are,” George says.

“You haven’t even tried it,” Dream complains.

“Fine. I’ll try your extra-ass popcorn,” George sighs.

It’s...

He’s not going to lie- it’s good.

“You know what? It’s- IT’S SPICY, holy fuck, that’s spicy!” George yells.

“It’s sriracha!? George! You can’t be serious,” Dream laughs.

“I can tough it out. I’m big and strong, I can eat spicy food,” George hisses, grabbing another handful stubbornly.

“You’re so dramatic. Go put pajamas on,” Dream says.

He pulls his plaid pajama bottoms and an oversized t-shirt out of his backpack and goes to the bathroom to change. When he comes out, Dream is in boxer briefs and a wife-beater under the covers.

George lays on the bed next to him, urging himself to remember to keep a reasonable distance between them.

Throughout the night, he simply seems to forget.

The first episode they watch is on esports, which is entertaining from the perspective of a Minecraft Youtuber. As time passes, they scoot closer together, giving each other bits of commentary and thoughtful discussion or plain old jokes and shit-talking. If he weren’t in a hotel room, he’d say it’s almost homey.

“He’s cute,” Dream mutters, mostly a comment to himself.

Oh.

“Not the cutest esports player you know, though, right?” George asks.

“Oh, shut up. I’d hardly call you an esports player. You are good at sitting there and looking pretty, though,” Dream chuckles.

George bumps against his shoulder playfully. It’s almost as if a spell had fallen over the room- it feels domestic and comfortable. There’s no pressure to do or say anything, no compulsion to be anyone. For once, he’s able to let a weight off his shoulder and be content.

He can imagine a world that he comes home to this every night and gets to feel weightless and happy whenever he wants. It’s a precious thought.

The episodes are short, so they fly by quickly. After a few, an episode starts up that Dream looks at and immediately skips.

“That one looks boring,” he says hastily.

Right before the next one loads, George catches the title and a thumbnail. The episode is called Monogamy, and it’s accompanied by a picture of a couple embracing at a wedding.

George smiles to himself at the flustered expression on Dream’s face. Of all people, he didn’t think *he’d* be the one getting shy. Still, it’s a cute look on him.

The rest of the night passes like a movie, the pair leaning against each other and talking until their eyes grow tired. Based on what Sapnap had been insinuating, George was worried there would be some kind of advance. He had been fretting what to do if Dream made a move.

He's delightfully surprised by how casually pleasant it is. There's an air of familiarity from how their usual interactions go, but without the restraint of having to hold back affection.

It's sweet and comfortable, and he's enjoying every moment of it- especially as Dream's speech starts to slow and his sentences grow more abstract.

George isn't usually one to stay awake the longest, but here he is, laying on his back and twiddling his thumbs while Dream is snoring quietly next to him. Watching his chest rise and fall slowly is the most interesting thing in the world, and he couldn't imagine falling asleep right now. He can't imagine missing the sight of the man next to him, and he wants to hold on to it for as long as he can.

As he watches him, he grows interested in things he's never thought about having an interest in before. In this peaceful, safe setting, George can properly take in the shape of his jawline, the silhouette of his Adam's apple, the square outlines, and hard angles that make up his body. He can process these newfound interests without the pressure of anyone watching.

Then, there's his face. His past crushes flicker through his mind like a film reel, trying to make sense of this unique attraction. The planes and shapes are unlike anything he's ever found appealing or at least acknowledged finding appealing. Now, while looking at his eyes, his nose, his lips, he wonders if it was always there, and he's just now started to listen.

And he's glad he did.

He gazes at his face; it's right there. It wouldn't take much to reach out and touch it.

So, George does just that.

Carefully, he holds out his hand, his fingers hover just above his cheek. Where he finally makes contact, it feels electric- his touch is feathery. Still, it's enough to feel the warmth radiating from the skin beneath. George flinches as he hears a noise.

Dream groans in his sleep.

He lets out a breath, calming down. What if he had woken up just then? What would he have said?

Oh, sorry for waking you up. I was just caressing your face like a fucking psychopath.

He doesn't know what to do. On the one hand, he may never get to feel this again. Tomorrow Dream could go home, and this would be the only time he ever got to be this close to him, sleeping in the same bed. On the other hand, he knows this is wrong, and he's pining over someone who could open his eyes at any second and want nothing to do with him ever again.

As George is deliberating that, his hand still brushing against his cheek, Dream starts shifting. In one motion, he turns over and swings both his arm and leg over George's body.

Shit.

Dream cages him against the mattress with an arm across George's chest and his thigh weighing him down, wedged between his legs. There was no position that could have possibly been worse than this.

Stay calm. Just don't move. He's still asleep. Don't. Panic.

In trying not to panic, George focuses on anything else in the room- the ceiling, the curtains, the bedside table, the lamp, Dream, Dream's snoring, the warmth of Dream's thigh between his-

Shit shit shit shit shit shit.

Dream shifts slightly in his sleep, and the friction of his leg makes George's breath hitch. He squeezes his eyes shut, begging for the tent forming in his pajama pants to go away. This isn't the time, this isn't the place.

The warmth and weight of Dream laying on him, his breath hot against his neck, it feels so good it almost has George in tears. It's like he's managed to steal a few seconds in heaven, a moment in the sun.

Can I control my dick for one minute? This can't be happening right now.

He clenches a fist and digs his nail into his skin, desperate for a distraction.

Please, let the Earth open a giant cavernous pit below him, throwing him straight into boiling magma. That would be better than this. Anything would be better than this.

All he has to do is fall asleep, but he can't take his attention off his... predicament. He resorts to filling his head with dark thoughts- losing all of his friends, losing his career, losing his dog, losing his family, *losing Dream*- and that, coupled with his anxiety, has his eyes welling up.

George looks up, trying to blink his tears away, but he can't stop them from streaming down the sides of his face. Before he can register what's happening, he's borderline sobbing.

"Hey," a hoarse voice quietly calls out.

All but falling off the bed in surprise, George turns to his side and ends up face-to-face with a pair of tired green eyes.

"Fuck, you're awake. Sorry," he says between snuffles.

A hand comes up to wipe the corner of George's eye, lingering on his cheek.

"What's... why are you... what?" Dream asks in his half-conscious stupor.

"This just happens sometimes," George mutters in response.

"Yeah, same. Sorry I... mmf... piled on top of you," Dream says sleepily. Despite the apology, he snuggles into his side, resting his chin on George's head. George thanks the universe that he doesn't notice his awkward boner, or at least, doesn't comment on it.

He goes from shaking sobs to breathless weeping, spent of all his energy. Dream utters a few quiet "shh"s and hums, rubbing circles into George's back.

Unable to resist, he buries his face in Dream's shirt.

The comfort of his presence and the steady cadence of his heartbeat beckons George to sleep. Whatever remains of his cognizant thought tries to fight it, but something deeper and softer in him gives in. He drifts off with the sound of Dream's breathing in his ear and hand cradling his face.

He doesn't have a nightmare that night like he thought he would.

This was enough of a dream.

Go For It!!!

As George comes to, he feels an overwhelming sense that something's missing. He blindly paws at the sheets, grabbing at the empty space. There's a lingering warmth there, and the sounds of running water slowly bring him back to consciousness. George sits up against the headboard and stretches out, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. His mouth tastes awful, so he fishes his toothbrush from his bag and walks into the bathroom drowsily.

When he opens the door, he's met with Dream's figure in the shower, obscured by the frosted glass and the towel hanging over the lower half of the sliding door. He quickly tries to dart back out, but Dream opens the shower door slightly and pokes his head out.

"Sorry I woke you up. You need to shower?" he asks nonchalantly.

"I just- I- I'll brush my teeth first," George stammers.

Dream smiles at him.

"Go ahead. I'll be out in a bit," he says, closing the door.

George stares at his reflection above the sink, feeling self-conscious. Even in the shower, Dream looks like a marble sculpture- the way his hair hangs loosely over his forehead blanketed in water droplets that trace down over his collarbone. He couldn't see it last night in the dark, but his shoulders are dusted in freckles that lead down his arms, complimenting the few speckled over his nose.

He closes his eyes while he brushes his teeth, barely trusting himself not to look at the shower glass. Dream is humming to himself, which he can just barely hear. God help him before his heart melts.

The water turns off, and Dream opens the door again.

"Can you pass me my towel?" he asks.

Without a word, George pulls it off the rack and hands it to him. Dream's fingers brush against his for a moment, and he can't tell if it lasted forever or simply felt that way. He makes eye contact and immediately shies away, toothbrush hanging in his mouth. As George rinses his mouth, Dream walks out with a towel loosely wrapped around his waist. He reaches over George's shoulder for a hand towel, a few stray drops of water falling onto him.

Dream musses his hair and runs his fingers through it until it's somewhat kempt. George can't help but steal a glance as he leaves.

Interesting.

George makes sure to get a good look at the toned muscles of his back, just for good measure, before getting into the shower himself.

"George is actually taking a shower? Someone mark their calendar," Dream says.

"Wow, what a momentous occasion, go live tweet about it or something," George yells back sardonically.

Lathering his hair in hotel shampoo and conditioner, he treats himself to a long shower. He doesn't often take the time to himself, but after both the stress and excitement of meeting Dream the day before, he decides he could use a bit of self-care

By the time he gets out, he picks his phone up from the kitchen sink. George goes through a quick Twitter check and his timeline is nothing but Dream's tweets.

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

when he showers ☺

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

thank god there's no 2in1 shampoo in there

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

oh my god he's HUMMING <3

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

should I prank him when he gets out

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

oh no he has his phone in the bathroom he's gonna read my tweets on the toilet

George walks out and glares at Dream, who's sitting on the bed looking like the cat who ate the canary.

dream2 livetweeting George's shower @dreamwastaken2

he caught me ☺

"You're so stupid," George says.

"It was your idea," Dream teases. He keeps looking at George, eventually realizing he's staring and looks back to his phone.

A smile takes up George's face as he thinks of Dream stealing glances at him. The blush on his

cheeks is a good look with his freckles. Any self-consciousness he felt earlier is washed away by Dream's starstruck gazing.

"I thought we were both going to be lazy today and I'd just go straight to my flight but we're both up early. Do you want to go do something?" Dream asks.

"Sure."

George grabs a change of clothes and returns to the bathroom. He piles his pajamas on top of the toilet lid, pulling over a jumper and a pair of black jeans, an outfit he thanks himself for choosing instead of a t-shirt and sweats.

Today is most likely the final day he has with Dream for a long time. There's so much potential, yet so many possible failures. Still, he looks at himself in the mirror and says, "you can do this," and walks out of the bathroom in a confident stride.

"*Boo.*"

Dream's whisper makes him jump back and yelp. So much for confidence.

"You're actually terrible, you know that?" George asks.

"Thank you," he replies.

Dream tidies the room a bit while George scouts out somewhere to get breakfast. He finds a cafe a few streets down, and they go for a walk in the crisp coastal weather. While they're walking, Dream's hand hangs by his side, brushing against his with every few steps. After a long, tense moment, he reaches over and takes George's hand as they continue on their way.

Doing everything in his power not to crumple and fall over, George squeezes his palm back, desperately willing his hand not to get sweaty. It doesn't do much, though, and he ends up pulling away to wipe his palm against his jeans.

"Why are you so nervous?" he chuckles.

"How are you not?" George asks sincerely.

Dream shrugs. He waits patiently to take his hand again. They go on, eventually reaching a small cafe of worn brick and ivy. As they enter, they're invited by the smell of pumpkin spice and espresso beans.

The woman at the register smiles at them, the bell above the door ringing a cheerful welcome.

"How can I help you today?" she asks.

"Can I get a latte and a blueberry scone, please?" George asks.

"Of course! And for you?"

"Do you guys have anything other than coffee?" Dream asks.

"We have lemonade and soda," she offers.

"Lemonade sounds good," he replies.

Her name tag reads "Yasmine." Dream hands Yasmine his card before George can protest. She

sets about tamping the coffee grounds while the pair wait by the counter.

“You’re American, aren’t you? Are you here on holiday?” she asks.

“Just visiting,” Dream says, looking at George fondly.

“Hopefully your tour guide is doing his job,” she chuckles.

“I’ve done my best. He’s already scolded me for using Wikipedia,” George says.

Topping off his coffee with steamed milk and pouring a cream heart, she hands it to him with a polite smile.

“And your lemonade,” she adds, handing Dream a cup and paper straw.

“Thank you,” he says with a nod. Both of them walk to a table by a window, sitting down across from each other.

George uncaps the lid of his coffee cup and takes a long sip. When he puts it back down, Dream is pointing his phone’s camera at his face.

“What?” George asks.

“You- heh- you have a milkstache-” Dream wheezes. “You’re so- hah- you’re so cute.”

He reaches over and swipes his thumb over George’s lip, wiping off the foam. It takes every ounce of his power not to sit there wide-eyed at the casual display of affection. Dream, still focused on him, takes a sip of his drink and immediately makes a face.

“This is *soda*!” he says.

“What?” George asks.

He takes a sip from Dream's straw.

“This is lemonade! What are you talking about?” George says.

“Why the fuck is it carbonated?” Dream asks.

“...Because it’s lemonade? What?” George says.

“No, this is like- this is Sprite!” Dream argues.

“Wait, is lemonade not carbonated in America?” George asks.

“No the fuck it’s not! It’s carbonated here?” Dream asks.

“What, do you want me to magically poof all the bubbles away, Clay?”

“No, I’m fine now that I’m expecting it to be carbonated. My brain is caught up now. Jesus, how do you live here?” Dream laughs.

“Big talk for someone from Florida,” George says.

“You wish you had gators in your backyard. The scariest predator here is, like, a weasel or something,” Dream says.

“It’s actually a badger, Mr. One Hundred IQ,” George says back.

They sit there, laughing at each other’s piss-poor jokes and lazy insults. Under the table, Dream is resting his foot against his, and George is helplessly leaning his face into his fist. It’s delicate, but sparks are flickering, and the air is charged like a live wire.

George is pulled out of his dream state by his phone vibrating.

“Sapnap is video-calling me,” he says.

“He’s probably feeling left out,” Dream teases.

George answers.

“Ayo, how are the boys?” Sapnap shouts.

“We’re great. Having lemonade that’s carbonated, for some reason,” Dream says.

“Isn’t that just Sprite?” Sapnap asks.

“That’s what I said!”

“You’re both idiots. Also, isn’t it the middle of the night for you?” George asks.

“I wasn’t sleeping anyway. Thought I’d check in on the two losers that ditched me to go drink tea or whatever you guys do over there,” Sapnap says.

“Pfft, hey, George actually brushed his teeth this morning,” Dream says.

“HOLY SHIT! Really? I thought your tweets about him showering were pushing it.”

George kicks him under the table.

“Have you read any replies? Dream team Twitter is in all-out chaos right now. It’s pretty funny,” Sapnap says.

“I’ve mostly been off my phone. I’m trying to stay in the moment,” Dream says.

“That’s fuckin’ adorable. I’ll leave you two to make some memories and all that shit,” Sapnap says.

“Alright, dude. It was nice talking to you,” Dream replies.

“Bye. Get some sleep, loser,” George says.

He hangs up, tucking his phone away.

Dream is right- he usually spends every minute of every day either on his phone or wishing he was. All he wants to do now is revel in every second he can get while Dream is still here, in front of him, breathing and real.

Making memories and shit.

George can drink to that. Drink coffee, that is.

They chitchat for a few more minutes before realizing they’ve been loitering at this table for too long, picking at his scone.

“Hey George. Have you ever played Odds Are?”

“No. What’s that?” he asks.

“One person gives a dare and picks a number between one and five. Then, you both say it at the same time, and if the other person got the same number, they have to do the dare,” Dream says.

“That... sounds dumb,” George says.

“Only if you’re chicken,” Dream says.

“You’re a child,” George says. “You go first.”

“Okay, odds are you spill your coffee on the floor.”

“I already regret this,” George says.

Dream counts down.

“Fou-”

“Two- Hah! Suck it! My turn. Odds are you give me your Twitter for an hour,” George says.

“You’re insufferable.”

Let’s go five.

He counts down, groaning at the hesitant “one” he hears. Dream pumps his fist in the air, cheering loudly without a care that they’re in public.

“Let’s go! Okay, okay. Odds are... you ask the barista for her number,” he says.

George gulps.

Dream counts down.

“Three,” George says, frowning as he hears Dream say the same. Eyes going wide, Dream’s mouth is gaping in a dopey, shocked smile.

“You said my number! You have to do it, you *have* to!” he says.

“No! I have no idea how to talk to people, let alone flirt,” George says back.

“Okay, I amend my dare. You have to ask for her number while having Sapnap in your ear, telling you what to do,” Dream says.

It’s a terrible idea, but he’d take that over fending for himself. He gives Sapnap a quick text and pops an earphone in.

Ride or Die <3

Dream dared me to ask for a girl’s number >

Can you call me and tell me what to do >

< pulling the ole sappy nappy eh?

< ive gotchu covered

“You got this George. I’ll tell you exactly what to do,” Sapnap says.

Getting up, both of them walk back towards the entrance, as if to leave. Dream waits just outside the door with a smug grin.

God damnit.

He approaches the counter with clenched fists, trying to remember how human beings interact with each other. The barista looks up from her notepad with a smile.

“Was everything alright?” she asks.

“Oh, oh, say ‘more than alright.’ And call her by her name, give her a compliment,” Sapnap says in his ear.

“More than alright. Yasmine, is it? You make a good latte,” George says.

“Thank you,” she says. “Are you from the area? I haven’t seen you here before.”

“Make sure to tell her your name. Be casual,” Sapnap says.

“I am, I just don’t go out much. I’m glad I did. I’m George,” he says.

This is good. Smooth sailing. Totally normal. Just flirt like you would with-

“He looks like he’s waiting for you outside,” she says.

“Okay, say this exactly,” Sapnap says. He whispers a cheesy line that George reluctantly repeats.

“He can wait. I just had to get your number,” George says.

Yasmine’s face falls slightly.

“Oh, I thought- I’m sorry, I assumed you were here with your boyfriend. I’m actually, um...”

She points to a red, orange, white, and pink striped pin on the bottom of her apron. George’s over-the-top smirk falters. Sapnap goes silent in his earphones.

“I’m- oh, my- I’m so sorry, he dared me to ask for your number, oh my god,” George stammers. His suave act is instantly gone, reduced to his usual stuttering, quiet mess.

“Oh, it’s fine! I didn’t mean to embarrass you,” she says.

“Hah, It’s a little too late,” George says sheepishly.

“He looks like he really likes you,” she says. George perks up, turning to look at Dream leaning against the glass. “He not asked you out yet?”

“No. I really don’t know if he would,” George replies.

“I don’t think you have to worry. Also, here, for your dare,” Yasmine says.

She picks up her notepad, jotting something down and ripping the paper off, folding it in half. George takes it and stuffs it into his pocket awkwardly.

“Thank you,” he stammers.

“No problem. Hope things work out for you,” she says.

George scurries out of there to meet Dream outside, hanging up on Sapnap. He hands over the paper without a word, blushing profusely.

“You actually did it. I’m impressed,” Dream says.

“Yeah, I did, you prick. I’m going to think of a really good dare, just you wait. I’m getting my revenge on you,” George says.

Dream rolls his eyes, opening up the paper. His eyes dart over it curiously.

“What, are you going to call her or something?” George asks.

“No,” Dream replies. He tucks the paper into the pocket of his jeans. Weird.

Deciding they’ve had enough outside time, the two of them make it back to the hotel room to check out. Catching an uber back to George’s house, they pack what little luggage Dream had into his bedroom.

“Does your mom usually leave you home alone for an entire weekend?” Dream asks.

“You make it sound like I’m a child or something. She’s a busy woman. I told her that you might come over, too, she was fine with it,” George replies.

“Whole house to ourselves, huh? We should throw a rager,” Dream teases.

George rolls his eyes. His room is a mess enough as it is, but Dream doesn’t mind or comment on it, flopping onto his bed.

“Actually, we could record something. There’s probably something cool we can do since I’m here,” Dream says.

“No! I- it’s- It’s just... you already have to catch your plane in a little bit. We wouldn’t be able to think of and set up a video in time. Let’s just chill,” George says.

“Are you sure? I don’t want to leave everyone hanging now that we actually met. I figured we could try to beat the game playing as the same person. I take the mouse and you take the keyboard,” Dream says.

“I... sure,” George says.

Ride or Die <3

< are we gonna talk about what i heard

< or are still pretending youre not in love with him

im not pretending anything >

its just hard for me to do anything other than be >

you know >

emotionally constipated >

i cant just tell him how i feel >

< if youre not ready to tell him

< show him

< and love is about compromises

< if he really wants to record ask yourself if youre willing to compromise

< also you havent uploaded in a month

im going to do it because he wants to >

and you havent uploaded in a month either >

< funny how you focus on that and brush over the fact that you love him

shut up >

“You wanna give me your setup tour, or what?” Dream asks.

He’s laying on his stomach across his bed, impossibly long legs hanging off the edge. George doesn’t know why he meticulously describes all of his equipment to the man who bought him a good chunk of it. Still, he goes through his setup while Dream nods along, listening intently.

George is beginning to suspect that Dream just likes listening to him talk. He doesn’t mind- he likes talking to him just as much. After the tour is finished, he hops off the bed and takes a seat in George’s chair.

“This is gonna be so stupid and chaotic. Let’s do it,” Dream says.

Setting up a record is something that George has done so many times, he hadn’t consciously thought about the process for months. Now, with Dream looking over his shoulder, he’s become hyper-aware of every step.

They situate themselves next to each other, George having pulled over a chair from the dining table. It’s crowded, but they make it work.

“Ugh, what are your keybindings? I didn’t even know they made left-handed mice,” Dream complains.

“Mad because you’re basic?” George jokes.

“Whatever, let’s just go. God, using inverted buttons is going to suck.”

Dream assumes his game face, brain switching into full gear. He’s already focused, scanning their surroundings, throwing out possible courses of action as they come to him. Speaking one steady

stream of thought, he directs George on where to go, how to get there, what steps to take. The air has a different feel about it, not on par with their usual banter and shit-talking. Dream is being calm, focused, patient- every so often looking to his right for confirmation.

“Thank god the golem dropped five, I don’t think we could do this without a shield,” Dream says.

“What are you talking about? You should be glad you have me here to carry,” George says.

“What is the cospasta? Oh- unpopular opinion, I don’t think George can beat the game. He has the disadvantage of playing with Dream, that’s gonna be really hard no matter how good he might be,” he wheezes.

“Exactly. What would you do without me, Dream?” George asks.

“I don’t even wanna think about it,” Dream says dramatically.

The banter they do have is softer, more light-hearted. Dream gives him soft praise and gently teases, evoking playful shoves and laughter. It’s akin to working on a group project with a crush, practically pulling each other’s pigtails. They get over the awkward controls quickly, working together surprisingly well.

“I’m getting the hang of this I think. This lava pool is so small, god, if I mess this up,” Dream says.

He sets up the frame of the portal with caution, making sure every detail is perfect. Just as he’s about to place the last bucket of lava, George walks backwards, making obsidian form in the middle of the portal.

“GEORGE! What is wrong with you?” Dream shouts.

“Relax! You can break it,” George says.

“Yeah, ten years from now!” Dream says.

As he waits, breaking the block with a stone pickaxe, George moves again, making him start over. Dream doesn’t say anything, simply looking over with a stone-cold glare.

“He’s looking at me like he’s going to kill me- Dream! I’m sorry, I won’t do it again! Please make the portal,” George says.

“I’m done, have fun playing by yourself,” Dream says dramatically.

George looks at him with puppy eyes, and an over-the-top begging face. Eventually, Dream rolls his eyes and takes the mouse back in hand. He gives him a rest, letting him break the obsidian.

“We’re turning into Skeppy and Bad. I wonder if we can top their daily divorce record,” Dream laughs.

Despite playing the first random seed, world generation is very much in their favor. They’re in and out of the nether in a good ten minutes with everything they need. When they return to the overworld, they bet on the direction of the stronghold like usual. The eye flies in the complete opposite direction, towards a mountain.

“Dude let’s MLG water, let’s MLG water!” Dream says once they’ve scaled to the top.

“Okay,” George says.

He jumps off the edge without warning. Dream has to get the water from elsewhere in their hotbar, placing it just in time to break their fall.

“You idiot. If we died there, we would have had to walk all the way back here,” George says.

“You’re lucky I’m such a pro gamer,” Dream laughs.

They make their way to the stronghold as a unit. Dream impresses George with finding the starter staircase by backtracking doors, finding a three-eye portal. Despite Dream’s complaints that he can’t get this luck on his own runs, he still looks excited.

As a combined force, they wait for the dragon to perch, going in for the kill with a hotbar full of beds. George is relieved that he isn’t in charge of the one-cycle, and Dream takes down the beast with only six beds. The final explosion hits, the thrill of beating the boss unreal as they get to do it together, in person.

“LET’S GO! DYNAMIC DUO, BABY!” Dream screams into the mic.

He grabs George by the hand and raises it up in cheers. As the screen cuts to the end credits, Dream is left with a huge grin on his face, still squeezing the other’s palm in excitement.

Eventually, while the text scrolls, the high energy wears off. They’re seated there, inches away from each other, still making unbroken eye contact as the adrenaline rush subsides. All else fades away and it’s only them and the quiet whirring of his PC.

George is the first to break the silence.

“I thought of a dare,” he says.

“Oh yeah?” Dream asks.

“Odds are…” George’s breath hitches. “Odds are you kiss me.”

A smile slowly spreads from ear to ear on Dream’s face.

“Alright.”

He leans in closer, reaching out to cup George’s cheek like he’s handling something precious. From under hooded eyelids, George looks up at him, in a trance.

“Five,” Dream says.

George answers by meeting his lips, eyes fluttering shut as he closes the space between them. Everything about Dream’s touch is electric, and the way he leans into him has George’s heart lighting up. It’s almost as if fireworks are going off in his chest, lighting up every place where Dream’s skin meets his. His cheeks are burning hot, and Dream can definitely feel it, but he couldn’t begin to care less.

Dream moves slowly and sweetly against his lips, pulling away for a moment to catch his breath.

“You didn’t say your number,” he chuckles.

“It was two, but- it doesn’t matter now, does it?” George laughs.

Dream shakes his head, reaching to card his fingers through his hair. He leans back in, this time with more fervor. The gentle drag of teeth against George’s bottom lip makes something stir inside

him. He's finally here, enraptured in a kiss with a man he's been waiting on for seemingly an eternity.

A man.

That brings an entirely new dimension to this experience, a complete first for him. So much is different- the square hand resting on his waist, the rough skin, the faint stubble against his chin, the large frame before him. Yet, so much feels like coming home, being safe and loved. All the paranoid sirens are long-forgotten, nothing being able to break this perfect snapshot in time.

It is perfect, despite the fact that they're sitting in his messy room at his desk, craning their heads at an awkward angle. It's everything that the books and movies aren't, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

The kiss finally breaks, Dream sighing a warm breath against him. There's nothing else to do but gaze at each other in disbelief. Of course this isn't actually heaven, but the man in front of George could convince him otherwise. He would believe anything- he's already gotten him to fall in love.

And goddammit, is he convinced.

"So..." Dream says.

George is at a loss for words.

Say something, idiot.

He turns back to his keyboard and plays the anime "wow" from his soundboard. Dream keels over, wheezing like crazy at the absurdity. George regrets it immediately, feeling insanely stupid.

"Is it weird that I forget you're real? That you're actually, you're really here, you're real," Dream says. He runs a hand along George's as if to make sure, still skeptical.

George can't blame him; he's close to pinching his own arm at this point.

"I'm real. I promise."

Dream looks to the monitor, the credits already over.

"I forgot we were filming," he says.

"We have a bad habit of doing that," George replies.

"What time is it?" Dream asks.

George tabs out of the game.

"My plane leaves in an hour. I'm probably gonna be late," he says.

George nods. And just like that, the spell is broken, the glass slipper crumbling to pieces as the clock strikes twelve. They remember their lives, their jobs, their responsibilities. The pair share one last look before getting up and going back to their regularly scheduled program.

The ride to the airport is bittersweet, treasuring their last moments together. Dream absentmindedly intertwines their fingers as he scrolls through his phone. It's so nonchalantly sweet that George has to stare out of the window to keep from screaming and blushing like a teenager.

“Wow, Twitter is... something else right now,” Dream chuckles. “Wilbur’s complaining that we didn’t invite him. ”

“Let him complain. He already had his Gogy time. I like you better, anyway,” George says.

“Aw, check this out,” Dream says.

Alex !THEY MET! @honkalxx

it finally happened!

we’re all so excited and happy for you guys <3

i drew this the moment i learned dream was in brighton haha

#dreamfanart #dreamwastaken @Dream_Fanart

It’s a drawing of them at Brighton pier, watching the sunset while George has his enchroma glasses on. The pastel colors are soft and frame a beautiful moment.

“Wow. That’s really good,” George says.

“I can’t believe we didn’t think of bringing the glasses first,” Dream says.

“I... may have already watched a proper sunset for the first time,” George says.

“What?! George!”

“Listen, I didn’t think it was video-worthy! And I definitely didn’t think I would be meeting up with you,” he replies.

“Well, we just have to settle for ‘George sees a sunset for the second time’ I guess,” Dream says.

His heart does a somersault at the notion that this could happen again.

“We’ll just have to do that, then,” George says.

The car pulls into the airport, slowing to a stop in front of a drop-off area. The drive here was so fleeting, neither of them had noticed they’d already arrived.

“Is right here good?” the driver asks.

“Yeah, thank you,” Dream says.

George follows him out to help unload his luggage. Handing him his suitcase, it barely registers that Dream is leaving. After two days with him, he forgot a world existed where they were ever not in the same room. They both stand on the curb awkwardly, neither knowing how to say goodbye.

“So,” Dream says.

“So,” George replies.

He drinks in Dream’s features while he still can, capturing a mental image of the man standing

brilliantly before him. Under the delicate morning sun, his hair looks more blonde, eyes catching the light perfectly. George wants nothing more than to kiss him, meet with soft lips again and sink into his weight. But in public, with people around them, watching, the thought terrifies him.

George does the most he can, wrapping his arms around Dream's middle and holding him close. Dream hugs him back with a light squeeze. He wants to die there with Dream leaning onto his shoulder. He would be thankful for never being anywhere else.

"This is it, then," Dream says, pulling away.

"Yeah. It is."

"I should probably go before they take off without me," he says. Dream reaches into his pocket and pulls out a folded piece of paper, handing it to him. "I thought you'd like to have this, by the way. I thought it was kind of funny. Bye, George."

"Bye Clay," he replies.

Dream gives his hand a small squeeze before leaving. The glass sliding doors close behind him, and he turns back, giving a little wave as he walks away. George stands, watching him blend into the crowd, feeling a tug of heartache.

He looks at the piece of paper he was given and opens it curiously.

GO FOR IT!!!

-Yasmine

Raw, Wild, Indescribable Emotions

In the coming days, every thought occupying Dream's mind, everything always comes back to-
"George."

He's found himself saying his name aloud, alone in his house. As strange as it sounds, it feels comforting to remember the moments he spent where George could answer back. Now, thousands of miles apart, he doesn't know how to go back to being without him.

Now that he's taken up speedrunning again, pouring himself into practice in his off-time, he has something to drown himself in. The black of his under eyes has gotten countless shades darker, but it's been too long to blame it on jet lag.

Dream's gotten used to a disjointed schedule of waking up in the late afternoon, eating one meal a day, and either practicing or coding until he passes out in the early morning hours. As stubbornly dedicated as he is, he'd never admit that this awful routine was killing him.

No, it's fine. Everything is perfectly, undisputedly fine.

Becoming aware of the tension in his back, he straightens out in his chair, his spine making an ungodly noise. Probably fine.

He presses his thumb to unlock his phone.

5:28 AM Wednesday, Eastern Standard Time

(10:28 AM Wednesday, British Summer Time)

Dream runs a hand through his hair, realizing he hasn't left his desk since he woke up. His eyes are dry and strained from staring at a bright blue screen without pause, and his hand is on the verge of cramping. Being who he is, his only regret is not streaming.

He feels his phone vibrate on the desk.

Sapnap has been messaging nonstop. Begrudgingly, he opens his texts.

Hey Papas

< hey are you awake

< its like 10 pm for you

< ill just ask later

< dude do you know when george is gonna be done his new vid

< i need to record with him and hes not answering

< aight just let me know

< hey have you eaten today? you havent really been taking care of yourself

< i can order you ubereats

< dream

< dreeeeam

whats up >

< bruh

< can you ask george to stop leaving me on read

Dream groans, turning off his phone. Every time he's talked to George since their first meeting, he feels a wave of paranoia; he hasn't had the balls to hold a text conversation, god forbid he call him, either. Figuring Sapnap deserves a little more effort than that, he turns on his phone again.

< NOT YOU TOO

< heart been broke so many times

< dont know what to believe

< its my fault its my fault

ill text him >

< wear my heart on my sleeeeeeve

< oh okay thanks

< do you wanna call?

< i was supposed to play among us but they cancelled

< im bored as shit

sure >

Why did he say yes? Dream's brain is virtually goop already, but he already agreed, so he hits dial anyways.

"Ayo, what's up?" Sapnap asks.

"Nothing. I've just been doing speedrunning practice," Dream says.

"World record yet?" Sapnap asks.

“No,” Dream chuckles. “Pretty shit RNG actually. Best today was sub-twenty-five.”

“In one point sixteen? That’s good,” he says.

“No, one point fourteen,” Dream says.

Sapnap goes quiet before laughing out loud.

“I don’t get you sometimes. Sub twenty-five, oh, what a bad run,” he says sarcastically.

“Shut up, you know that’s not that great. For me, I mean,” Dream says.

“I think you should count more wins,” Sapnap says.

“If I’m not hard on myself I won’t get better,” Dream says.

“If you’re hard on yourself, that’s how you end up playing nonstop until three in the morning. Yeah, I’ve seen your Discord status. I’m gonna bet you haven’t had water or food, either,” Sapnap says.

“...I’ve had water.”

“Yeah. That’s what I thought.”

Dream massages his wrist, just now noticing that his hand is slightly trembling. He hates when Sapnap is right.

“You tell George to stop being an idiot, I’ll order you something,” Sapnap says.

Fine. He’ll text him.

Can’t Shake You

Dream cringes looking at his name in his contacts. That was a moment of weakness.

“Oh I saw your Spotify, too. Really on a Melanie Martinez kick, huh? You’ve listened to Can’t Shake You, like- twenty times today,” Sapnap says.

He buries his face in his hands. Can the universe not let him be angsty in peace? Going back to his phone, he builds himself up to open his keyboard.

Sapnap asked me to tell you to message him back >

George answers back immediately.

< ill get back to him

< sorry i was out all day

< did you want to play on the SMP later?

im too tired to be on a stream >

< not streaming

< just us

Just us.

How does he say that so easily? Dream is supposed to be the one who shamelessly flirts, who makes him flustered, who teases until he can't push anymore. This should be a nonissue, but the flood of anxious tension in his chest has more control over him than he anticipated.

"Okay man, the food should be there in twenty. Wanna talk about what's goin' on?" Sapnap asks.

"Nothing's going on. I'm just unsure about some things right now," Dream says.

"Dream. I'm blunt with you. So, I'm gonna be blunt when I say that you're a fucking mess. Tell me what's wrong or I'm running across state lines to deck you myself," Sapnap says. "Are we gonna talk about how this is happening right after you visited him?"

"It's about that, but it's also not about that. I don't know," Dream says.

"I think you do know," Sapnap replies.

Flashes of that weekend race through his head, moments he never thought he'd get to experience. The quiet adventure of stealing glances from across the table, feeling the dip of his hip under his hand, hearing him laugh not through a crackling voice call, but raw and genuine and enjoying every drop of his voice he can get; that's love. But that was so much easier to admit when he wasn't faced with George, breathing and warm, right in front of him.

How is he supposed to go back? How is he supposed to go forward?

Dream assumed that the moment he landed in Orlando that would be the start of nonstop messaging, video calls, flirting, and no more barriers. Now, he's sitting, stiff-necked, bones like syrup and vision bleary. There's an itch under his skin, and now that he's taking stock of his body, a sense of feeling ill overwhelms him.

What happened, then?

Reality set in.

"Okay, you know what? I'm scared. I'm really, really fucking scared. I have no clue what I'm supposed to do now. I kissed him, Nick. I kissed him and I went for it. We were in a little bubble of being happy and now I'm back to square one," Dream says.

"Square one? You moron, you could ask him out right now! You could tell him how you feel, or go fly out there and kiss him again. You're way beyond where you were even a month ago," Sapnap says.

It's easy for Sapnap to say that from an outside perspective. All of that is so easy in theory. He

could ask him out, right now, but can he?

“Okay. I’m overthinking too much. I’m making a pros-cons list,” Dream says.

Sapnap laughs.

“Oh. Wait. You were serious?” he asks.

“Yeah, I’m serious. I need to think about this objectively,” Dream says.

He gets a post-it note and writes a line down the middle. Doing it on his computer notepad is an option, but he needs to separate from the virtual and clear his mind.

“Okay, I’ll help with your... whatever this is. Shoot me some pros,” Sapnap says.

Pros.

The foremost thing would be getting to date George. That in and of itself is probably worth fifty cons, and he could name an infinite number of benefits that would have. But for now, he’s putting all that entails under one umbrella.

“God, being with him would be amazing. Also, that means we could do cool boyfriend stuff together, there’s the content side of it. We could do date streams, have a minecraft wedding, everything like that. But, that brings into account the reality of this situation, which is that I have no idea how that would fit into our jobs,” Dream says.

“Good point. You have your audience and platform to think about. But hear me out, and this is important- Fuck. That. Why would you let Youtube and social media impact your happiness?” Sapnap asks.

“Are you kidding? It impacts all of us. Any YouTuber who says it doesn’t is lying. It’s not as simple as saying ‘fuck this’ and doing what I want,” Dream says.

“Why? Why is it not that simple?” Sapnap says.

“Because- because-”

“Because you won’t let it. That’s why,” Sapnap interjects.

Dream scribbles every possible scenario on another post-it, giving full detailed courses of action and all the repercussions they might have. He looks back to his list.

Pro

Con

being with him

everything else

There *is* everything else. The real world.

“There’s also the future to think about. What if it doesn’t work out? How would that change everything? What do we do then?” Dream asks.

“Why would you go into a relationship thinking about it failing?” Sapnap says.

Dream drops his pen, groaning in frustration.

“I’m not getting anywhere with this. This isn’t making it any clearer,” he sighs.

“Because you’re all worked up in the maybes and the possibly’s of it all. How ‘bout instead of throwing around hypotheticals you could just, y’know, talk to him?” Sapnap says.

Talk to him?

Talk to him.

He looks at his phone again to see a Twitter post notification from George’s main account. Opening it interestedly, he pulls up the tweet, waiting for the attached image to load. Dream wishes he could go back to the millisecond before the grey turned to color.

His eyes scan the caption again with a dull, sinking panic.

George @GeorgeNotFound

found this woman lost at the beach she wont leave me alone

stream Ok on Your Own :)

“Are you texting him?”

People in this photo: @mxmtoon

Dream stares into the filtered sunny photo of George standing next to Maia, an arm on her shoulder, her hair streaming around his face in the wind and something in him shatters. He knew she’d be going on a trip to Europe, he knew they’d probably go to the beach, he knew that there was nothing between them.

But, at the same time, George isn’t his. If he were to pursue someone else, right now, there’s nothing Dream could do about it.

He looks helplessly at the picture. Them. On the beach. Where they went together.

It *hurts*.

“Hello? Dream? Are you there?”

He forgot Sapnap was still on the phone.

Looking back to the perfectly neat bullet notes on his paper, he bites into his lower lip until it turns white. How do you go about weighing your options objectively when all that’s there is raw, wild, indescribable emotions?

“You’re right,” Dream says.

He crumples up his post-its into a wad and throws them in the trash.

“I usually am. What about?”

“It’s all on me. I’m doing this to myself. I’m way too far into my head. This isn’t something I can read studies on and make a spreadsheet over, this is something I need to *do* . I’ll call you back later,” he says.

“Yeah, that’s great, but... I just saw- I- I think you should talk to George about-” Sapnap stutters before Dream accidentally hangs up. He figures he just never messaged Sapnap back, so he makes a mental note to remind him. Right now, he has to call George and speak his mind before he chickens out.

“Hey, George, can you talk?”

There’s a sound of frenzied breathing and an audible swallow.

“Dream,” George says, sniffing softly. “Um- hey.”

That Next Day Can Only Get Better

The feeling of his touch, electric, leaning in like a weighted blanket, chest full of fireworks, skin lit up where it meets, cheeks burning hot, soft lips-

It's perfect. Don't ever let it end. Stay here forever-

A tinny alarm chime starts blaring in George's ear. Pulling his pillow over his head, he curses time for marching onward. How much would he have to give for the ticking to stop, just for a few minutes?

The noise is still going off next to him. He knows he chose the most annoying alarm deliberately to wake him up, but he's still mad at past George for ruining the moment. He had been up all night the previous day editing the video he and Dream recorded; now he's been too entrenched in replaying that moment to get any sleep. How many times has he pressed snooze already? Can he afford one more?

"Ugh."

He mumbles into his bedsheets. What did he need to wake up for again?

"Shit."

George checks his alarm name.

MXMCHAMP

!wake up dumbarse!

SNOOZE DISMISS

"SHIT."

Throwing off the covers, he speedruns the quickest shower of his life. George sends her a quick apology and pulls on the first semi-presentable outfit he can find. Maia is well within her right to be pissed, but in all her benevolence, she messages back with forgiveness and understanding.

George remembers that he never set his video with Dream to upload, but he doesn't have time to watch through it now. He decides to say fuck it and exports it anyway, fine with having a few editing mistakes here and there.

Once he arrives at the cafe, Maia is waiting for him outside. The embroidered flowers on her mask match her halter top, a floral print ascot around her neck. Coupled with the coat draped over her arm and her creeper face earrings, she has a sense of fashion to be trifled with.

"Sorry I'm late. I like the earrings," George says.

Her face lights up behind the mask.

“Thanks, I thought it was fitting. And don’t worry about it,” Maia says.

“Can I make it up to you with a coffee?” George asks.

“Tea and I might let it slide,” she chuckles.

Tea? She’s making a great first impression. George hardly goes out and he’s full of nerves, so meeting at a place he’s familiar with is easing the stress significantly. When they enter, he’s greeted by a friendly face at the register.

“George, right? Back already?” Yasmine asks. Her eyes pan over to Maia and her eyes go wide.

“Oh- oh my god, you’re- hi! I love your music! If it’s too much of a bother, would you mind taking a picture?”

“Not at all, I love meeting fans,” Maia says.

“Can you take a picture for me?” Yasmine asks George, handing him her phone.

“Sure.”

Maia poses with a peace sign, and Yasmine looks to be on the verge of screaming. George gives her phone back and she thanks the both of them profusely before taking their order.

“By the way, did it ever work out with that guy? The one you were here with last time?” Yasmine asks.

Face flushing red, he chews on the inside of his cheek, lost for how to respond to that. Maia gives him a curious smile, raising her eyebrow at him.

“Uh- I- well, I don’t know yet,” George stumbles over his words.

“Good luck to you on that front. Enjoy your tea,” she says.

George follows Maia sheepishly to a table, trying to ignore her cheeky expression. She doesn’t ask, which he’s infinitely thankful for.

“So, how’s your Eurotrip been going?” he asks.

“Pretty good. It’s amazing to get away from all the election stress. I’ve seen some gorgeous countryside, it’s so peaceful,” Maia says, taking a sip.

“That’s great. I can’t imagine how tough it’s been for you guys in the states. Good thing you got to have your vacation. I’m glad we get to meet, even if only for a little while,” George says.

“Yeah, sorry it’s such short notice, and just to get breakfast. I thought I’d have more time before I board my next train to London,” she says.

“I feel even worse for being late,” he sighs.

“I promise it’s fine. This meetup is messy, but it’s fun, you know?” Maia says.

“Yeah,” George replies. His phone buzzes with notifications, it has been for a while.

“That sounds like something important,” she says, pointing to it.

“Sorry, my friends like to quadruple text me when I don’t respond. It’s probably Dream trying to

be annoying,” George says.

“Speaking of- you guys met up not that long ago, right?” Maia asks.

“Yeah. Why?” George replies.

“No reason. Just happy for you,” she says.

“Thanks. It was... something else. It’s kind of surreal seeing someone in person when you never thought you’d get to. This is a little surreal too. I’m nervous if I’m being honest,” George says.

“Oh thank god, I’m so anxious right now. I didn’t know if I should say something,” Maia says, laughing with relief.

After getting the initial nerves off his chest, they sit talking for a while, just getting to know each other and enjoy the pleasant company. Maia tells him about music, he tells her about must-see spots to visit in London- it’s refreshingly calm and amiable. Speaking to Maia reminds him just how little he’s been talking to Dream, to the point that he’s starting to feel a physical distance between them. He’s also reminded that he can’t think of anything without it circling back to thoughts of Dream.

Maia eventually glances at the clock with a frown, not having much time left. She suggests going down to the boardwalk, so the two of them walk idly towards the beach.

“This is the perfect spot for a mandatory ‘we met’ selfie,” Maia says.

“It’s not fair, I’m in a jumper and jeans and you’re here dressed like a model,” George says.

“Don’t sell yourself short- at least it’s not a hoodie and Florida gators sweats,” she laughs.

They take turns snapping pictures in front of the sparkling pebbly coast, wind, and seagulls creating a beach scene out of a movie. When he looks at the picture he took, he feels a little embarrassed and underdressed. Maia is posed like a movie star meanwhile he has no idea what to do with himself.

“God, this was nice. Short but nice,” she says.

“Meetup of the century,” George says.

“I have to go catch my train soon. Glad we got to hang out, even for a bit,” Maia says.

“We should talk more. I forgot how, just, cool you are,” George says.

“We should. And I am cool,” Maia says.

He walks her to her Uber, giving an awkward hug before she steps in. She does a little wave before the car drives off. George has a funny feeling in his chest, the realization of how lonely he’s been in the past few days hitting him in waves. He tries not to think about it too hard on the way home.

Back at his desk, he checks his phone to see what he missed. Most of them are from Sapnap, and George just now remembers they were supposed to film today. He makes a mental note to apologize and reschedule, not feeling up to it right now. After a bit of scrolling, he sees a message appear from Dream.

George’s eyes come to life, the small grey box in his notifications taking his whole attention, any other train of thoughts now gone off the rails. He opens it hastily.

dre

< Sapnap asked me to tell you to message him back

Oh.

Dream hasn't played with or texted him, and now the first thing he says is to talk to Sapnap? Wonderful. Something in George was hoping he'd ask him to record, talk, or just do anything together. It was supposed to be simpler now. They were supposed to move forward.

ill get back to him >

sorry i was out all day >

Fuck it.

George isn't going to sit waiting for this guy to text him like a helpless infatuate.

did you want to play on the SMP later? >

< im too tired to be on a stream

not streaming >

just us >

George waits patiently for Dream's reply.

And he waits.

No response.

The more time passes by, with that checkmark staring back at him insultingly, his eyes start to strain from staring at the same spot on his phone. That's what he gets for taking a chance. George wants to scream, resenting the feeling of being back where he started- hovering over his keyboard, overstrung and pining.

He figures he might as well post the pictures he took with Maia, take his mind off these miserable feelings dwelling in his gut. A funny caption is the way to go, posting a lighthearted facade to the world to live vicariously through in his time of anguish.

George @GeorgeNotFound

found this woman lost at the beach she wont leave me alone
stream Ok on Your Own :)

George tags her and hits post, reclining in his chair. He should text Sapnap back.

Ride or Die <3

< dude dude dude

< GEORGE

hey >

sorry I forgot about our recording session >

< yeah i dont care about that

< have you watched the video you uploaded??

no? >

was it really that sloppy? I did it late last night >

< are

< are you serious

< yeah uh sloppys a word for it

< please tell me that footage was a joke

< please drop the /j

< tell me thats not actually when you guys kissed

what >

What?

No.

No no no no.

He opens his youtube channel, brain going blank and his hands fly without direction, clicking on his newest upload. George skips around, seeing several messy cuts here and there until he gets to the end.

Dream cheers their triumph over the dragon, and the end goes, as usual, videos linked over the last

few moments. After that, though, there's a few seconds of quiet over a still screen.

"I thought of a dare," George hears his own voice echo back at him like a spit in the face.

"Oh yeah?"

"Odds are... Odds are you kiss me."

"Alright. Five."

Thankfully, his mic didn't pick up much of the noise, but at full volume George can hear the faint sound of lips meeting and heavy breathing. The muffled noise is cut off and the video ends, left in a deafening silence. He feels sick to his stomach, something special they shared shone under a spotlight for the world to see. George has never felt more exposed.

There are two options of what to do now, and he doesn't like either of them.

His first instinct was to delete it, just as he did last time this happened since he keeps finding himself in this situation. Last time, he managed to take it down and address it afterwards, buying him more time to come out on his own terms. But this isn't last time.

If he takes it down, that would be admitting ignominy. He shouldn't feel ashamed to love him or have kissed him, but those distant sirens are back in his head, and he's powerless to that fear. But if he left it up, he has the chance to play it off as a joke, albeit a really stupid one.

People would believe that, though, that they would make that a joke. Dream and George, always teasing but ultimately the spark between them cold and stagnant. Thinking about that, it's enough to make George spiral into doubt about where their relationship stands. There's always the possibility that this is one elaborate joke, that his heart is going to be crushed and everything will go back to business as usual. At the end of the day, their chemistry is the foundation of their jobs, and it would be foolhardy to throw that away chasing a pipe dream.

His dream.

Maybe Dream is ignoring him because that's exactly what's going on- he's trying to quash this fling before it interferes with their livelihoods. This is his polite way of telling George to fuck off and that what happened between them is nothing. That's it, isn't it? A polite 'fuck you?'

George starts spiraling into every past interaction, every time he shamelessly declared to the world how much he loves him without knowing it. The instinctual euphoria of hearing Dream's voice and feeling his presence now sits weighted around his neck like wooden stocks.

Then, the tears come. Always the tears.

He doesn't hold back this time, letting all his frustration out in the forms of angry, heaving sobs. Cursing Dream, cursing himself, cursing the conventions of society for inflicting him with ugly, crushing shame, George presses his hands into his eyes until he sees shapes and colors.

Nothing's even happened, Dream hasn't even said a word, and yet he can't stop the dam from breaking. Even though nothing's happened it doesn't stop the feeling that the world is ending around him.

His phone starts ringing. It's Dream.

Shit.

George swallows up his tears and wipes his nose on his sleeve, answering the call. He prays he can't hear his shaky inhales.

"Hey, George, can you talk?"

Oh god, he saw the video, he's probably angry, he's probably going to say it's over. There's no way out of this.

"Dream," George says. His nose is running again; he silently wipes his cheek of a stray tear. "Um-hey."

"Woah, are you okay? What's wrong?"

George can barely speak, words caught between frantic breaths.

"It was a mistake, I was editing so late, I didn't catch it," George spiels.

"Wait, slow down, what are you talking about?" Dream asks.

"Did- you didn't see my video?" George sniffs.

"I don't always watch your uploads, you caught me," Dream chuckles confusedly.

Oh.

Relief washes over George before it hits him- now *he* has to be the one to tell him.

"I fucked up, Dream. I really fucked up," George mutters.

"Okay, it's going to be fine, just talk me through it," Dream says.

God, he feels like he's going to throw up.

"So- you- you know how- at the end after we killed the ender dragon- we were still recording," George forces out. He doesn't have the ability to continue, but he doesn't need to.

"No," Dream says softly. His voice sounds wounded. "Did you really?"

"Yeah," George says numbly.

"Is it still up?" Dream asks.

"Yeah."

"Take it down. Please."

Chills are running under George's skin. His lip is on the verge of scarring from how hard he's biting down.

"If I delete the video, we're admitting there was a mistake worth deleting," George says.

"Fuck, George, I'm pretty sure people already *know*. I'll take this mistake with dignity and move on. There's no point trying to wiggle out of this one. Even if people believe it's a joke, I can't in my good conscience have that audio stay up. That was our moment, ours," Dream says.

"Dream," George whispers. He doesn't know if it's a protest or a plea.

“Do you know how raw it was? Everything I said to you? Do you even know how vulnerable you make me?” Dream says.

George can't tell if he's angry, his tone is colored with too many emotions to decipher. He opens his channel in another tab, doing as Dream wants. He feels a mixed sense of relief once the video is gone.

“I understand if you're mad at me,” George says.

“I'm not mad at you! God, I'm in-” Dream stops himself, exhaling deeply. “You know why I called you? I was going to ask you what we are.”

George gulps.

“What are we?” he asks.

“I don't know. All I know is I'm scared. I've never felt this really, truly, terrified. When we were at the airport, when you hugged me goodbye, I thought you were going to kiss me, in front of all those people. I almost froze, my hands were shaking the entire plane ride,” Dream says.

“I wanted to. I really did. It's so hard to tell what I can and can't do. It's so hard to tell what this is,” George says.

“We have to address the audio. We have to face it head-on,” Dream says.

“I know. I know.”

“The thing that always gave me solace in streaming or Youtube is that you control exactly what and how much of you is seen. Having no control over that, feeling too seen- that's ruinous,” Dream says.

“Yeah, take it from me,” George says, a little bitterly.

Dream goes quiet, most likely realizing it's not George's first time. Being outed feels simultaneously like yesterday and an eternity ago. Even now, he's still dealing with the emotional repercussions.

“Sapnap ordered me food, it's probably waiting for me. I have to go. I'm going to make some tweets or something, I'll figure it out,” Dream says.

“Talk to you later?” George asks.

“Bye.”

A dull ache resounds in his chest. He heads to his kitchen to reheat leftovers and refill his water bottle, needing something in his system before he passes out from dizziness. The day started off so pleasant and normal, but George just had to find himself in one of these situations again.

Maybe the universe will tire of making him a punching bag someday. Unlikely, but one can hope.

Getting into bed to wallow, he checks twitch to see if any of his friends are live.

DREAM SMP SHADERS HURRY JOIN

(English)

George watches a couple of minutes before chat realizes he's there, promptly calling him out. He types a few messages until Karl asks him if he wants to get in VC. George isn't up to it at all, but he wants to make an effort not to hole up in his room in dejection.

"Want to facetime?" George asks.

"Sure," Karl says.

His chat is blowing up excitedly, lines and lines of text describing how much they miss him. George is motivated by that, missing his viewers too.

"Ooh, whatcha eating, Gogmeister?" Karl asks.

"Mashed potatoes. I'm not supposed to be having food in bed, don't tell my mum," George giggles.

"Nobody snitch, chat. Snitches don't get riches," Karl says, giving an over-the-top giggle back.

An alert rolls in and George hears the text to speech read out a donation.

"Can George talk about the deleted video?" the monotone voice drawls out.

Karl's smile goes tight-lipped.

"So, you met mxmtoon, hmm? Mm mm, that's pretty co-ol," Karl says, sing-songy.

"Yeah, she was really nice. I can't wait until 'rona starts dying down and I can meet up with people from the SMP," George says.

"Wilbur said something about a meetup vlog series, like a one-on-one video with each of the SMP members in person. It's gonna be so cool when we can do stuff like that," Karl says. He scans his second monitor. "Yeah, sorry chat, I can read your donos and stuff after the stream."

George feels a twinge of guilt. It's impossible not to feel like a burden to the people around him. Karl continues happily, though, so George stays on and puts up a brave face.

He'd never realized how scenic the server is; the evening sun casting its last vestiges of dawn over the landscape shifts the silly Minecraft server into a different view. It's all about perspective, once you think about it. All it takes is a different lens to see something in a new light.

George supposes that's what happened with Dream. Someone he thought he'd cemented his view of, and all it took was a few moments for his world to change. He wonders if there's a different universe where that spark never happened. Is it worth it, to love and be loved with all the hardship that comes with it?

"Alright guys, I think I'm going to end here. Sorry for the short stream, I have to wake up in four hours."

"Four hours? Karl!" George says.

"Haha, oops. I'll probably be playing Jackbox tomorrow night. Let's get one last go of money

machine. Last chance to drop your primes, guys,” Karl says. Ever the entrepreneur.

He dances in his chair until the music fades and the live stream ends.

“I don’t know how you always have so much energy,” George says once it’s just them.

“Gallons of monster and years of practice,” Karl laughs.

“I think I’m going to go,” George says.

“Alrighty. Thanks for coming on today. Sorry about, uh, y’know,” Karl says.

“Yeah. I know. Good night.”

“Bye dude.”

It’s far too early to sleep, but George is too drained to be productive. He opens Twitter, wondering what “question answering” Dream was getting up to. Most of it is him quashing rumors and apologizing for the mistake. But others aren’t.

sarah misses techno @sxrahza

i dont want to make either of you uncomfortable or assume the clip is real but what is going to happen to your guys vids and stuff moving forward?

I

dream2 @dreamwastaken2

Nothing is going to change. George and I know where our relationship stands.

We do?

He closes twitter, figuring it best not to scroll any further. Now, the tiring boredom is setting in. If Karl didn’t need to leave, he would’ve stayed as long as he could. George can’t handle being alone with his own thoughts right now.

A glance at his Discord page shows him that Sapnap is on. Hm.

George hits call, hoping he doesn’t have to lay in bed in the quiet for any longer.

“Ayo, what’s up?” Sapnap asks.

“Why are you awake?” George asks.

“Did you call me just to ask that?” Sapnap asks back.

“No. I was just wondering if you were going to sleep soon,” George says.

“Eh, depends. I usually go with the flow in terms of sleeping,” Sapnap says.

“Can you talk?” George asks. Damn his voice for cracking.

“Sure. What about?” Sapnap says.

“God, I don’t know anymore. Dream was ignoring me, now he’s probably pissed about the video, and I’m just waiting for the next nonissue to fuck everything up. It wasn’t supposed to be this hard,” George says.

“Expecting relationships not to be hard? Rookie fuckin’ mistake, George. You gotta keep in mind that however much you’re missing Dream, he’s missing you just as much. He’ll come around,” Sapnap says.

“And if he doesn’t?” George asks.

“I’d call a funeral home. The only reason Dream wouldn’t be drooling all over you is because he’s dead or dying. Be patient and for the love of god, communicate with him,” Sapnap says.

“I’ll try,” George says. It would be easy to blame it on Dream, but he’s willing to admit it’s at least partially his own fault. “My thoughts at the beginning of the day are so different than my thoughts now. Everything changes so quickly.”

“That’s life on the internet for you. A lot can happen in a matter of seconds,” Sapnap says.

This train of thought is exhausting. “I’m tired, but it’s so early,” George says.

“You’re an adult, you can go to bed when you want. How about a sleep call?” Sapnap asks.

“That’d be nice. I could use the company,” George replies.

“Okay, I’mma get cozy. Close your eyes and shut your mouth, it’s time for beddy-byes,” Sapnap says.

“What the hell’s a beddy-bye?” George asks.

“Just go to sleep.”

He sighs, letting the tenseness in his shoulders relax. His speaker emits the perfect white noise blend of breathing and background. Once he’s on the verge of drifting off, Sapnap’s voice comes through the phone faintly.

“Everything’s gonna be fine. Remember that the worst possible future only exists in your head. When you wake up tomorrow, that next day can only get better,” Sapnap whispers.

Sleep takes over so quickly that he just now realizes how tired he is. George gives into the weight on his eyelids and returns to the hazy sight of Dream, hand cupping his cheek, eyes on his lips like he wants to kiss them and never let go.

Still with Me?

"I want to yell at him for being such a fucking idiot. I want to grab him by the shoulders and shake him, just to see if there's anything rattling around in his skull. You know what? God, I want to kiss him, and just *maybe* smack him upside the head a little bit. Do you know what I mean, Sapnap?"

"I... really don't, Dream."

The warm humid evenings are starting to make his brain rot, he's sure of it. It *should* be wintry and magical. He should be listening to Christmas Songs and tormenting his sisters with clues about what gifts he'll get them. It's not his fault this dumb brit is ruining his life.

In an ideal world, Dream should be able to amicably talk through his feelings, be honest that he's part of the problem, and then move on and get himself the greatest boyfriend in the world. But this isn't an ideal world, it's not even a normal one, as far as he's concerned; he's a fucking Minecraft Youtuber.

"Well he isn't talking to me," Dream says.

"Maybe he thinks you're upset with him?" Sapnap offers.

"I am," Dream replies stubbornly. "But I'm also not. I *want* to be mad. I'm mad at myself, how's that?"

"Unintelligible. But, I get where you're coming from. Sometimes when you don't communicate, you spiral into bad blood when you have no idea what the beef is even about," Sapnap says.

"I know what it's about!" Dream says.

"Do you actually?"

"...No."

Sapnap sighs on the other end.

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

"I could use a good laugh about now," Dream says.

Sapnap pauses for a few seconds. He hums as if looking for something. Then, all at once, Dream's Twitter is flooded with notifications. He opens his DMs to a barrage of fanart, jokes, and messages of support, all coming in one after the other. The heartfelt messages and artwork that must have taken hours to make, all just for him- it's enough to push him to tears. It always is. At first glance, he's already been smothered with love and affection, all of which must've taken hours to compile.

Wait.

"You... did you just have all of this bookmarked?" He asks.

"Maybe. Look through some of it. Like, really look."

He gladly scrolls through and smiles at every touching comment, widens his eyes at the creativity of every illustration. For quite some time he hadn't sat down and scrolled through his mentions and tags, and every time it's like opening a precious gift. It's hard not to feel undeserving. Towards the

end, though, it devolves into mostly memes and ironic fancams.

Dream taps on an edit and almost drops his phone at the bass boosted audio playing over cursed Minecraft images, "*if you like pornhub, you'll love pornhub live.*"

Sapnap chokes out a laugh.

"Wow, dude, not on call."

"Believe me, I haven't in weeks," Dream replies, only half-jokingly.

"I was jo- wait, really?" Sapnap asks.

"Shut up, man. You know it's hard when you're, like, talking to someone. We're not really dating, so it'd be weird thinking about him, but he's all I can think about, but we're not exactly talking to anyone else even though we're not really talking, you know?"

"You keep saying 'you know' and I *really* don't. What the fuck happened to you, man? You're such a goddamn mess," he replies.

"George happened," Dream says softly. He can almost hear the eye roll. "Don't. Say. Anything. It's not like I can help it- I'm just stuck in this purgatory; I'm not acting like myself."

"Yeah, you can say that again. When's the last time we talked about anything other than George?" Sapnap asks.

"I don't know- God, you know what he did yesterday? He showed up on someone's stream, and spent the entire time flirting and making jokes. Not to mention, while that person was live, he like a tweet that-"

"You know what? No. I'm done. I'm done getting dragged into your horny bickering. I'm done with the whole 'woe is me' shit. You two won't sort this out yourselves? Fine. I'll do it myself."

Sapnap goes quiet, and Dream opens Discord.

→ Sapnap added george to the group

And then, the telltale ding of someone joining the call.

"...Hello?"

The accent sends him into a shock, a voice he hasn't heard speaking to him in ages- soft, slightly raspy from what he assumes is sleepiness, knowing it's past midnight over there- not because of the many time zone widgets he's installed just for him but because at this point, he just *knows*.

"What? Sapnap, why did you add me to this... What is this?" George asks.

"Because I'm tired of both of you. If I have to sit through one more conspiracy theory about what the other is doing, I'm gonna blow my brains out. Now, you are going to sit, and you are going to TALK."

Sapnap mutes and deafens, leaving them to their devices. The gravity of the tense silence is

crushing, and his fingers hover over his keyboard in a tremble so fierce it's aching. George is the first one to break the tension.

"Dream."

He remembers hearing that in person, his own name spoken with such adoration, now warped and fuzzy with static. George sounds bothered. It hurts.

"I-"

"It's-"

"No, you go-"

"Sorry, go-"

They laugh for what feels like the first time, definitely the first time in a while. Dream clears his throat.

"I'm sorry if- if you think I was mad at you- I mean I was, but only because I didn't know what else to feel, and it was better than admitting I hated how much I like you, and- and- I don't know."

"Yeah. Me neither," George admits. "Thoughts started growing in my head before I could control them. It was like... this idea of you, that wasn't really you, started taking over. And I was terrified. I *do* like you. Over anything else, I like you, but I'm so... lost about how to say that."

"It feels so scary to speak, you sink into these scary thoughts until that's all there is," Dream says.

"Exactly. Just very... scary. Like you said, it was easier to hurt. Then it built up and got out of hand, and now I don't know if we're fighting, or what we're fighting about," George replies.

"Are we fighting?" Dream asks.

"I don't know!"

"I don't want to be."

He hears the shifting of sheets and a sigh, forming the image of George lazily settling into bed with his phone in hand.

"Can we decide to not be fighting anymore," he says with a yawn.

"Yeah," Dream smiles. "I think I can do that. Can we talk? About anything else? I just... I miss you- your voice. I miss your voice."

George lets out a breathy laugh.

"I miss you too. Talk to me about something."

"Yeah, just give me a second to collect my thoughts-"

"No," George says. "I hear it in your voice when you're thinking at a mile a minute, and you desperately want to ramble about what's on your mind. Don't slow down. Let your train of thought go. Take me with you."

No one's ever asked that of him. Closing his mouth and forcing his mind into a space it didn't fit

into- that's the way it always goes. His entire life has been spent holding back, and George makes him want to let go. Dream takes in a deep breath.

"God I think about you. All the time. I wonder about what you're doing, who you're talking to, if you're thinking of me. I wonder about how you're feeling. The thought of you upset makes my heart ache. I hated being mad at you, I *hated* raising my voice at you. I feel like every word from my mouth is threatening to be your name. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I can't think. And the tension, the not being able to talk to you? It was suffocating. Hearing your voice- I can *breathe*. So let's stop being mad at each other. Let's stop thinking about what we've done wrong in trying to tiptoe around this feeling, how it feels *right*."

All of those words flooded through him like a dam breaking, ushering out at once. His chest is heaving. He feels *alive*.

"Still with me, George?" Dream asks.

"Yeah," he replies breathlessly. "Still with you. Always with you."

"Once the wound has scabbed over, we can talk about the intricacies of who hurt who, who was wrong, and how to fix it. But now, anything else. That can wait until we're lying comfortably somewhere, some morning, far from now." Dream says.

"Lying comfortably somewhere? Some morning?" George asks. The hope in his voice is both thrilling and profoundly moving. Perhaps that's just Dream always hearing something more.

"Yeah. All of this hurt shit? That can wait. I'll remember to be mad at you later."

"Deal."

They sit in a comfortable silence that Dream now realizes he's taken for granted.

"Alright dipshits, I'm back. Did we make up already?" Sapnap interrupts.

"Yeah. I think, for now, it's good. We're good." George replies.

"Great. Any closing remarks?" Sapnap asks.

Dream is almost drained, finally having let out what was pent up. He scrapes together the last few thoughts he has.

"I miss you. Both of you. I wish I could give you guys the biggest hug right now. I wish we could all have chill streams again and hang out in VCs and not have to worry about anything else than whatever dumb shit we got into. I miss that."

"I miss you guys too. I wish I could like- just wake up to seeing you both tomorrow. I know we joke about it, but actually. Nothing would make me happier," George says.

All Sapnap adds is "Hm."

"Just 'hm?'" Dream asks.

"No, of course I love and miss you guys too, I was just-"

"Woah, who said anything about love? Wow, Sapnap clingy era? Simpnapped confirmed?" George teases.

“Oh shut up, dumbass. I know you guys love me. I live in your heads rent-free and you know it,” he replies.

“Yeah, whatever. Can we sleep call or something?” Dream asks.

“It’s like... not even midnight. Who are you and what did you do with Dream?” Sapnap asks.

“No, but it’s late for George.”

“Already back to simping for me, hm?” George replies.

“If you want him to stop, just leak your first kiss again,” Sapnap says. They both go quiet. “Too soon? Too soon.”

“Hey, sleep sounds like a good idea,” George mumbles. His voice begins to drawl as he audibly snuggles into his pillow.

“Can I play music?”

“Sure, Sapnap.”

Music has never helped him sleep, more often than not taking his brain to places that keep him awake. Dream figures he'll let Sapnap do what he wants.

There’s a crescendo of hushed breathing that comes to a halt, a pause before the first few chords of a song come over the speaker.

I don't want a friend

I want my life in two

Waiting to get there

Waiting for you

Waiting for you

The swelling of the instruments swells his heart. Dream is overcome by a phantom yearning, something deep and unaddressed in him drawn to the surface.

When I'm around slow dancing in the dark

Don't follow me, you'll end up in my arms

You have made up your mind

I don't need no more signs

His breath hitches.

Can you?

The music is swirling and moving, building in his chest.

Can you?

Can he?

When you gotta run

Just hear my voice in you

Shutting me out of you

Doing so great

And with that, faster than anything ever has, Dream is pulled out of consciousness. Somewhere sweeter, somewhere where his shoulders lay far from heavy.

You

Everything, at Least For Now, is Okay

Chapter Notes

NSFW is everything between ***

It's not necessary to the plot, feel free to skip :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When songs get stuck in Dream's head, they get *really* stuck. If he had taken a drink every time Joji's voice came over his speakers, he'd be at the ICU within the hour. He's committed the song to memory, giving the melody its own room in his mind, right next to-

God, George. That's it, just George. If he took a *sip* every time he thought about George? Death, he's sure of it.

Every time he thinks he can predict where they'll go next, he ends up fantastically wrong. But this time? He's pleasantly surprised. After their "getting it all out there" talk, they've been calling more often, just to do work or errands together. Writing notes for Dream Shorts and coding challenges has become more appealing with George on the other line, humming as he does laundry or scrolls through Twitter. Not that Dream gets much done, though.

The past days have seen an increase in time spent on his computer and a decrease in productivity. Like he could give a shit, anyway. There are more interesting things to do, like listen to George talk about his day or laugh at a dad joke, or even simply breathe by his mic.

He feels like something should be happening, or at least he should be acting differently, but it's just like it used to be, if slightly more intimate. All his brewing plans to pour his heart out while they weren't on speaking terms decided to shrivel up and die.

Dream has admitted his feelings and had a breakthrough. He should be able to proceed normally, right?

Right?

"I have a system. I've started meticulously organizing all my George thoughts and putting them into a corner. I call it the George thought corner."

"Yeah, that's great," Sapnap says. "But I was calling to-"

"That way, I can come back to it and address it later. So far, it's been working pretty well. I currently have to revisit a thought about George's smile, George's lips, George's facial hair, George's hair in general, George with blond hair, how I feel about George with blond hair, George's lips again-"

"Oh my god, shut the fuck up. *Please*," Sapnap says. Dream, unfortunately, does not shut the fuck up.

"I was getting to the bit about George's hands, now that's one I *really* have to-"

"You're not gonna get to anything if I knock your ass out in the next five seconds," Sapnap

interrupts.

That gets him quiet. He stows away that thought about George's hands for later.

"Are you. Busy. This week."

"Yes. Obviously yes. You literally invited me for a podcast episode for Tuesday, and I have plans with my sister tomorrow, and some lore streams are supposed to be happening in a few-"

"Cool. Cancel it."

Dream blinks at his phone.

"Cancel... what?" he asks.

"All of it. Clear your schedule," Sarnap replies.

"I'm not following," Dream says.

His phone buzzes by his ear. Sarnap has texted him a screenshot of a calendar app with a scribbly circle over the following several days.

"It's a surprise," he says, with absolutely no follow-up.

"So what, I'm just supposed to cancel everything for a week?" Dream chuckles.

"Yeah. Well, you only have to cancel on your sister, really. Everything else should work itself out," Sarnap replies.

"...You're completely serious. You know what? Fine. I'll just call my little sister and tell her I can't get froyo because Nick says he has a 'surprise,'" Dream says.

"Perfect. Oh, something should arrive at your house soon. Promise you won't be disappointed," Sarnap says, immediately hanging up.

Huh. That happened.

He was joking, but he figures now he *actually* has to tell her. Begrudgingly, he opens the contact, jokingly named "Drista" and hits dial.

"Hey, what's up?"

"Hey... so I have to cancel our plans tomorrow," Dream says.

"What? We haven't hung out in forever, dickhead. Why?"

"So Sarnap called and told me to clear my schedule? Listen, I don't know, but I trust him and chances are, it's something important," he replies.

"More important than me?" she asks, in her most goody-two-shoes tone.

"Yeah, probably," he teases.

"Whatever. I don't like you anyway. I'll go to Menchie's with mom," she says.

"Glad we came to an understanding," Dream chuckles.

“You’re so annoying. You caved to him when he just asked? Twitter has got such the wrong idea about you,” she replies.

“For the love of god, please get off Twitter or I *will* kick your ass,” Dream says.

“I have your baby pictures, don’t test me,” she says. Touché. “What are you clearing your schedule for, anyway?”

“No idea. But I guess I’ll find out,” he says.

“Fine. See you some other time, loser,” she replies. She blows air really close to the mic before hanging up. Little shit. He misses her.

He misses his friends.

Conveniently enough, he gets a Twitter notification.

George @GeorgeNootFound

excuse me while i go feral

Dream subsequently sees a notification that Quackity is live. Alex mentioned a chill stream earlier on discord, an invitation that Dream declined. It's a kind gesture from fate, for once not screwing him over. He'll take whatever crumbs of his friends' voices he can get.

When he opens the stream he's on the SMP, engaging in some scheme or another with Karl. Quackity seems to be using a VR headset, getting violently jump-scared while George teases him in chat. It's the kind of thing most stans would deem a "comfort stream," and he can understand why.

Dream gets comfort from watching his friends too. Perhaps not in the same way, but the warmth in his chest is undeniable. He wonders what it must be like not knowing them, and feeling that level of kinship all the same.

It's curious, trying to think from the perspective of a viewer- especially with George. He used to be able to, before he knew George's breath felt like against his, chest rising and falling in his sleep, what his lips taste like. *That's enough of that.*

It's not like he can help it. His "George thoughts" are provoked by any mention of his name; he can't go throughout his day without them.

If that's not the gayest shit in existence, he doesn't know what is.

That line of thinking is interrupted by a muffled sound from the outside world. Dream lifts his headphones off one ear. Nothing.

He hears it again, louder this time. That's... knocking. Someone's knocking.

When Sapnap said he was sending him a surprise, he didn't think he meant *today*. The UPS guy needs to learn how to drop packages and leave. Dream figures he may as well pick it up now before he forgets.

He takes his time stretching out and leaning back in his chair, leisurely walking to the door and staring out the peephole.

What the fuck.

He fumbles to unlock the deadbolt, his heart rate spiking as the door flies open and it's-

"Hey, Dream."

It's him.

It's *him*.

"It's you," Dream says.

George was nervous walking up to his doorstep. Millions of thoughts were racing in his head, questioning what he was doing here, if this was a mistake, if it would be worth it. When the door opens, all his questions are answered. This is the best decision he's ever made. He chose Dream, and Dream is worth so, so much.

"Yeah. It's me," George replies.

Don't fuck this up, do not fuck this up.

"So- um- how do you like your surprise? I know I didn't come with a bow on top, but-"

Dream walks forward like he's in a trance and holds his face, eyebrows knitting together like he's threatening to break out in tears. He looks carved from marble, chiseled and god-given, crafted from the finest materials from every land across every distant sea, and oh god, he's kissing him.

George almost melts into the floor, every part of him at ease and utterly, completely home. This is different than last time. Dream is drawn into him like a magnet, charged with something needier than before. It's not tender and eager like a first meeting. No, this time, it feels raw and passionate, but familiar, like no time has passed since they were able to hold each other last.

Dream condenses volumes of emotion into one kiss; it's a "hello," an "I missed you," a "thank you," an "I love you," and a "never let me go." George responds by pushing him against the door, offering his most vulnerable, unrestrained self in every place their bodies meet.

It follows a story, with an introduction, an escalation, and an adventure. George has never felt more himself than being here, sharing himself with Dream. And god, does he want to give up all of himself.

Dream pulls away, having to catch his breath, and his eyes look back with desperation. He licks his lips, and George just about shivers.

"Do you," Dream pants, "have any idea how *long* I've been wanting to do that?"

George throws his head back in laughter, and Dream leans down to sink his head into the crook of his neck. George simply runs a hand through his hair, enjoying the quiet humming into his shoulder.

“Why don’t you tell me?” he asks.

Dream replies with a trail of kisses up his neck to his jaw, eventually pausing to wheeze.

“How? How are you here?” he asks.

“I took a plane,” George says blankly.

"No, you fucking idiot, how are you *here*? In Florida?"

"After we all talked, Sapnap surprised me with an elaborate plan to get all of us together," George says before going stiff. Shit. He wasn't supposed to say that bit.

"...*All of us*?"

Dream looks ready to cry.

"You- you were tweeting! And you were just on the SMP!"

"I gave Sapnap my Twitter and Minecraft. How's your own medicine taste?" George asks.

Dream kisses him one more time.

"Pretty good, I'd say," he smiles.

George rolls his eyes.

"So, are we gonna stand in the doorway all day, or...?" he asks.

"Oh, um- yeah, right," Dream stammers.

Any anxiety George came here with has vanished at the sight of him stumbling through a house tour. The place is a hallmark of organized chaos; it's so undeniably Dream that it makes George smile. The fact that his first thought was, "I could see myself living here," should be more embarrassing than it is.

“Just ignore that pile. And that one. And those clothes,” he scratches the back of his neck awkwardly. “Listen, I wasn’t expecting guests-”

George delights in his flustered smile.

“It’s fine. It’s... human.”

Dream talks through it like a commentator, letting him "ooh" and "ah" like a live audience. Once settled in, George sits comfortably, unlike a guest, as Dream continues what he was doing before he showed up.

They fall into a space that's almost domestic, taking time to bask in each other's presence. George notices the small things- how he paces absentmindedly, how his takes up the room simply by being. Dream seems so comfortable, so himself, it's captivating.

“Have you eaten?” he asks.

“No. Or slept. I had a nap and a bag of pretzels whilst on the plane if that counts,” George chuckles.

“Unacceptable. I’m making you dinner, and you’re taking a long, long nap,” Dream insists.

George is led to the couch, spoiled with fuzzy blankets and pillows as Dream sets up in the kitchen. He refuses to stay put, though, stubbornly following to watch Dream cook.

“Go sleep,” he chastises. George wraps his arms around Dream’s middle, resting his chin on the other’s shoulder. Dream scoffs. “How am I going to make food with you clinging to me like- like a koala?”

“Did you know koalas all have chlamydia?” George mutters into his neck.

“No. I did not know koalas all have chlamydia.”

“Well now you do,” he replies.

“...Can I cook?” Dream asks, trying to pry his arms off.

“I can help you,” George says.

“No offense, I don’t think you can cook.”

George takes personal offense to that. It may be true, but he still takes offense. There’s a pot. The pot is full of water. The water is being boiled. There is a box of pasta. Pasta.

“Spices,” he says to himself.

“What?” Dream asks.

Still keeping one arm around him, George walks around to look through the cabinet. Dream watches him, bemused as he struggles to reach the handle. He’d be blushing if he weren’t so focused on getting this damn thing open.

“Why don’t you just let go?” Dream asks between wheezes.

“Then how am I supposed to hold you, dumbarse?” George asks back, very matter-of-factly.

Dream rolls his eyes and scoots over so he can open the cabinet. There’s...

“There’s cups in here,” George says.

“That’s not the spice cabinet,” Dream replies.

He points at the cupboard to the left. George shuffles back to the other side and opens the cabinet. Just one problem.

“How’s the weather down there?”

Dream places his chin on George’s head and reaches over him, impossibly long arm snatching the parsley from above. George could have gotten that. Rude. In retaliation, he engulfs him in a hug, trapping Dream’s arms against his waist.

“You’re so, like, clingy. What’s up with you, hm? I expected you to sleep through the next time we’d meet up,” Dream hums.

“Now that I have you, I’m not letting you go. On the flight, I thought about how long I waited, how many times I felt trapped. I never want to go back. Not now, that I’m here,” he replies into his

shoulder.

“George.” Dream's voice takes on something delicate. He squeezes tighter.

That's how they stay for a while, airing out every bad moment with each exhale against the other. George feels hands fidget with his belt loop, play with his hair, rub circles into his back in apology. It's easier than talking, and it reaches him in a deeper way.

Why does he hear bubbling?

“Oh, shit,” Dream says, pulling away.

The pot of water is boiling over, the lid being lifted as bubbles spill over the sides. He turns the heat off and grabs a towel, and all George can do is lean against the counter and hold in his laughter.

“Am I that much of a distraction?” he asks teasingly.

“Shut up. I have to do everything around here, huh?” Dream replies.

Talking like they're living together and have been for years- it catches him off guard. George's heart swells watching him flutter to clean up the stove, knowing this is a sight no one else gets to see.

While Dream continues cooking, he tries to stay out of his way for the most part. George observes every step, up until the point that he sets the table with plates. Dream pulls out his seat and grabs him a napkin, a gesture so often under-appreciated. He's thoughtful in everything he does, loving in every glance he takes.

“Glad one of us can cook, I was almost worried,” George says.

“I only know what my mom taught me. Pasta and steak is about it,” Dream replies.

“This is way better than anything I can do, promise,” George says.

Home-cooked food tastes great after the takeout of the past several weeks. Sitting across from each other, they both clam up, having hit a point of realization that all they have left to do is talk.

George distracts himself with Twitter, cringing at his last post; well, Sapnap's post. All the replies are clowning on him for being "Americanized." Oh Sapnap and his stubborn insistence to handle his Twitter himself.

Speaking of, he deserves an update.

Ride or Die <3

hey >

at dreams house now >

< LETS FUCKING GO

<did you guys kiss

I dont like you >

< so thats a yes

shut up >

yes >

< what are you doing right now

eating dinner >

< why are you texting me

< shouldn't you be cuddling or smth

im just >

extremely nervous >

not being on speaking terms to making out in the doorway of his house after a few weeks is a lot >

< DAMN

< get it gogy

why is that the part you focused on >

< youre finally getting some you loser

< and dont stress

< did you WANT to keep angsting or something

its just whiplash I guess >

< make the most of it

< youre back to swapping spit? enjoy it

why are you like this >

< channel that nervous energy babey

< hey

< i know you love me

false >

< whatever you say

< you should talk to him

From across, Dream is staring at his phone.

he's texting someone under the table >

should I be worried >

< your texting someone under the table too dumbshit

I know but >

idk >

< if you HAVE to know

< hes texting a gc with me karl alex and bad

?? >

you guys have a gc >

< SO DO WE??

I know >

but it still feels bad >

< were pretty much just bullying him tho

about what? >

That earns him a long pause.

< uh

Eventually, Sapnap sends him a screenshot of a discord group chat, with all scribbled out except:

Dream

I just want him so *bad*

George stares at the image for a bit, letting it sink in.

< we aint uh

< teasing his poor grammar

Oh.

George looks up from his phone and sees a flurry of emotions flash through Dream's face. He squints and snaps his head back up, turning pink. Sapnap must have told him he sent it- not that George is surprised.

"I- He-" Dream tries to say. "Fucking Sapnap."

Laughing in response, George enjoys the flustered look on his face. He missed this; they haven't gotten a light-hearted or playful teasing in what's seemed like forever. Somehow, it's back how it used to be, and at the same time, not at all. Perhaps they always acted this infatuated. Perhaps now they're finally acknowledging it.

"So," George says.

"Yeah," Dream replies.

"I-"

"You-"

"I just wanted to say-"

"No, go ahead-"

"What I mean is-"

"I just-"

"I love you," Dream says.

They both fall quiet. His eyes are impossibly tender, longing pulled to the surface, glinting off his irises.

"Yeah. Uh. Same."

Oh god.

You fucking idiot.

Instead of getting angry, Dream bursts out laughing, having to wipe his eyes and bang his fist on the table. George clamps a hand over his mouth, embarrassment gnawing at him.

"I love you too, sorry, I'm such a-"

"You. You're you," Dream says adoringly. "And that's perfect."

"Someone's feeling all Romeo and Juliet today," George mumbles.

"How about we both don't die in the end, though? Let's just... I don't know. Play Minecraft and eat fast food," Dream says.

"To Minecraft and fast food," George says.

He helps clean up the dishes, figuring it's the least he can do. They scrub plates and nag at each other like newlyweds, easing into roles like it's second nature. There's a gradual shift into sharing a space, but one that meets no resistance.

It's like they're made for each other that way.

George gets acquainted with the house pretty quickly. Getting acquainted with Patches? Not so much.

"She's just skittish. Patches doesn't like new people," Dream says.

"Animals don't usually like me, but this one hurts a little," George chuckles.

"Hey, it took me a while to like you too. She'll get used to you, promise," he says.

Dream picks her up and scratches the underside of her chin, calming her down some. He lets George offer a hand, but Patches shies away from it. George sighs. Cursed rejection.

"She does better laying down. C'mon," Dream says.

So, the pair end up retiring to the couch, limbs tangled together as a shitty horror movie plays in the background. George thinks this was an excuse to cuddle, but he's not one to complain. Patches moves to lay on Dream's chest, next to George, kneading into his hoodie until she's satisfied. He takes George's hand wordlessly and places it beside her. The soft rumbling of her purrs is soothing.

Patches must have decided she has better things to do, though, because she hops off and retreats elsewhere. That leaves him there, snuggling into Dream, safe in his embrace.

George could get used to this slice of heaven, the gentle magic of being in his arms. Dream has taken up playing with his hair, another hand grazing up and down his side. Eventually, he settles on his v-line, toying with the hem of his hoodie.

Woah.

George instinctively arches into his touch, grabbing Dream's hand and squeezing. It wasn't an act of resistance. Dream looks up at him. His eyes are glassy. His eyes are *needy*.

"Hi," he says.

"Hey," George replies. His voice comes out as a squeak, and he wants to bury his face in his hands. He doesn't though- something is pushing him forward without a care in the world. Dream pushes him off so George is laying back, their eye contact unwavering. He lifts his hoodie up by half an inch, looming over him.

"Can I?" Dream asks gingerly.

"Of course."

He doesn't take it completely off, pushing it up his chest. His shirt rides up and leaves him bare to the dim light of the living room. George shivers, but not from the cold. His heart is thrumming so

fiercely, Dream can surely feel it at his fingertips.

His touch is scalding, wandering hand all but leaving steam in its wake. It's so raw, so honest that it surely can't be real. Dream's fingers trace all the way to his collarbone.

"Can I?" he asks again.

This time, all George can muster up is a nod.

His hoodie is pulled off, clumsy and fumbling, but perfect in the moment. George is itching with anticipation, wanting to crash into him, devour him whole. Dream takes his time to explore the expanse of his skin, the canyons of his ribs, the dips of his hip bones.

"Please," George says.

"Please what-?"

"Please."

It's all he can say. He doesn't need to say more.

Dream meets his lips, slotting together like he's done this a million times. George is surprised when he slips tongue, a noise dying in his throat.

Please let this be real.

As Dream pulls away, breath hot against his, he smiles.

"Your thoughts are loud," he whispers.

"I can't help it," George replies.

"Then don't. Let me."

He moves down to his neck, leaving a trail of steadily purpling bruises. The heat is so intense it's almost nauseating. Some fumes must be going to his head, leaving him delirious. Thoughts stir in his mind, repeating over and over.

want

need

love

you

Dream's thumb hooks under his waistband, pausing before he goes any further. Once he's gotten his confirmation, Dream sits up to push George's jeans around his ankles. He takes the opportunity to swing his leg over, straddling George around his thighs. He runs a hand along his arm soothingly.

"Can I?"

George grips his hand and squeezes it as tightly as he can. Dream nods in understanding. He won't need to ask again.

He teases over the fabric at first, staying balanced with an elbow leaning against the couch cushions. George doesn't know what to do with himself, staring up helplessly. Distractions, he needs distractions, or else he's going to have something really embarrassing happen really early.

Dream is wearing a hoodie. The hoodie has strings. His hair looks dark, darker than usual. His eyes look dark. The friction is intoxicating. His hand is slipping under his boxer briefs, and oh fuck.

"*Fuck*," George whispers. Dream has him in hand, the gentle rocking of his hips not making this any easier. Just as he feels like he can't take anymore, Dream lets go, getting up off the couch.

"Wh," George murmurs.

"I'll just be a second. Promise."

Dream walks into his bedroom, there's a sound of a drawer opening and closing, and he comes back with a bottle in hand. His eyes go wide.

"Don't worry. I won't go that far. Not tonight," Dream assures him. "Just tell me if I should stop, and I will."

George nods. His boxers come off, and if he wasn't vulnerable before, he damn well is now. Dream does the same, though, stripping by the couch and taking his place again. The sight is enough to make one fall to their knees- the brilliant shape of his figure, the silhouette of his frame, the planes of his skin. The weight and warmth of Dream's thighs over his own is beyond electric.

The bottle is capped again and tossed onto the floor. He stares into Dream's eyes as he reaches down, focusing in on the places where green clashes with hazel, blending and swirling in a pool he'd love to drown in.

George feels like he could suffocate and die over the subtle drag of his fingers, face burying into his own shoulder. The steady in and out has him unraveling, putty in Dream's hands.

A steady stream of words are pouring from George's mouth- prayers, pleas, desperate cries. Dream looks like he's basking in it. He's so regal like this, eyes hungry, backlit and bathed in soft yellow. No oils or acrylics could ever do it justice.

George refuses to simply lay back, though. He grabs the bottle off the floor and coats his fingers, taking Dream in hand. The latter shivers, knees digging into his sides.

Burning red, Dream drapes an arm over his own face, eyes squeezed shut. George takes him by the wrist.

"Watch me."

He guides Dream's empty hand so they're wrapped around them both. George rubs encouraging motions into his thumb, their hands moving together. Feeling bold, Dream pulls out, returning with another finger, and pushes forward until their hips are almost flush. The pair continue in harmony, no sound but breathless whimpers and panting.

Chasing release, Dream raises in pitch, both knowing they're close.

"God, I love you," George manages to get out in broken words.

"I love you," Dream replies.

They both arch back, George's thighs shaking, squeezing his eyes shut. His head dips back against the arm of the couch while he rides out the high, feeling Dream sink against his chest.

This is the kind of feeling they write songs about. There's damp hair against his face, slowing breaths warming his neck. He wants to be marked in the places Dream's skin meets his. He wants to remember it forever.

Dream tilts his head up to look at him. He gazes at George like he's everything.

"Hi."

"Hey."

George changes his mind. This is how he looks his most beautiful- hair mussed and face flushed, sweat beading at his forehead. If only Dream knew how many *leagues* he is beyond perfect.

"How is it just like the movies, and at the same time, not at all?" Dream asks.

"It doesn't feel real," George replies.

"Because we should still be fighting?" Dream asks, quieter.

"Because it took us this long," he says.

Dream huffs softly, nuzzling into his collarbone.

"I can finally let out my George corner," Dream mumbles sleepily.

"Your what?"

"Don't worry about it. I just really really like you," he says, sounding out of it. George chuckles, letting the man doze off. He imagines that could be a funny story to tell down the line.

There'll be a "down the line." He almost cries at the thought. He's allowed to have this, he's allowed to be this happy.

George traces constellations on the freckles dusting his shoulder. The living room sways like a rocking ship, and everything, at least for now, is okay.

Chapter End Notes

One more left :)

Chat me up on Twitter: [@EtceterAngel](#)

God, Does He Know

Chapter Notes

(Once again, NSFW is in between "****" and completely skippable)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream wishes the previous night could last forever. He takes in the sight of George while he's sleeping, admiring his complexion in this light. He seldom gets up this early, but he wouldn't miss this for the world.

The cramped space of the couch left Dream sore, among other things, and he curses himself for not moving to the bed. An easy enough fix, he thinks. Dream scoops George up and carries him to his room, careful not to wake him; he wants to let him sleep in.

Twisted up in rumpled sheets, this is how they spend their mornings. Throughout the day, Dream takes every opportunity to stay touching him- whether it's watching movies on the couch or working on his computer, some part of them is always connected.

Patches warms up to George quickly, realizing she has a new source of head scratches. Dream has begun to notice treats going missing from the pantry, which might have been a factor. Not that he's complaining, in fact, he's never had a better source of serotonin than watching Patches sleep on George's chest.

It's comfortable and safe, like they pressed pause last time they parted ways and picked up right where they left off, once again in their bubble. The days are somehow so lazy and entirely eventful.

The first morning, Dream wakes him up with breakfast in bed. It's not much- pancakes topped with strawberries- but George lights up with a sleepy grin anyway.

Dream could waste days laying here, listening to George ramble as he stuffs his face.

"I wish I'd gotten a little heads up, I should've told fans we'd be on break," Dream sighs.

"Break from what? Streaming?" George grins.

"You wound me," he collapses theatrically onto the mattress.

George whines about being too tired to move, so Dream sits on the edge of the bed and gestures for him to come over. Wrapping arms around Dream's neck, legs held on either side, George gets carried by piggyback into the living room. They mostly laze around, learning the other's body language, taking in the other's unfiltered presence. Talking on voice calls was pleasant, but this is another level of intimacy, seeing each other wholly beyond what they choose to share. Not spending every waking moment working on three projects at the same time is foreign, and much less something he thought he'd ever enjoy.

The next day, Dream notices sodas disappearing from his minifridge.

"Why does American coke taste so shit?" George asks, sipping one anyway.

“Are they different? I didn’t drink any when I was over there,” Dream replies.

George squints at the can.

“Maybe Tommy’s right. American things are just inferior.”

“Hey,” Dream says, “I’m an American thing.”

“You’re *my* American thing.”

That earns George a peck on the cheek, Dream snatching the soda out of his hand while he’s distracted.

“And stop stealing from my mini-fridge you clown,” he says.

After, Dream looks up British Coca-Cola and learns that they use real cane sugar. Since it’s the closest thing he can get, Dream stocks his fridge with Mexican coke, which he had to drive a good two cities away for. As the number of sodas dwindles from his fridge, George seems to complain a lot less. Dream still takes every opportunity he can to chastise his thievery. At the end of the day, however, he appreciates how his kisses taste like Coca-Cola, and just the kind George likes.

The following day, George walks out fresh from a shower wearing one of Dream’s hoodies. It’s something Dream didn’t know he needed to see with his own eyes, because lord, is the sight better in person.

“I feel like I’ve read a fanfiction about this,” Dream teases, tugging George’s hoodie strings from where he sits on the couch arm. He perks up in response.

“You too?” he asks.

“What.”

“What?”

George sinks into the hoodie in embarrassment. Dream tackles him, wheezing as he weighs him back into the cushions. Having the glorious insight that George is, in fact, very ticklish, has come in handy.

The face staring back at him looks as if he’s waiting for something. Dream rolls his eyes, tilting his head to meet his lips, feeling butterflies at the smile against his own. He’s good at noticing things, especially when it comes to someone he loves. One thing he’s noticed- George never asks to kiss him, but Dream can recognize the look on his face, like he’s expecting something, but can’t bring himself to say. The man is a closed book, but Dream’s determined to scour every page until he can recite it by memory.

He realizes they’re supposed to fly out tomorrow, meet up with the crew, and they’ve filmed a sum total of zero videos together. He feels almost guilty for not taking advantage of this to record something, but looking at the man’s dopey smile, he’s feeling really unapologetic.

The world can wait- George is in his arms.

As the night comes to a close, so do their lazy morning escapades.

Neither of them are particularly thrilled about getting up at 8:00 am, but it’s for a worthy cause. It was agreed that they would all meet up in Los Angeles, Sapnap already renting an airbnb with Karl

and Quackity. George's pouty face, clothed in only boxer briefs and sheets almost makes him want to cancel the flight to let him sleep in. Almost.

They compromise.

His mom drops them off at the airport, Dream's pajama bottoms loose around George's waist as he sits, snoring beside him.

"Did he forget to bring pajamas?" his mom asks, slyly.

"No."

Dream glances up at the rearview mirror. She has a knowing smile on her face.

"You seem happy, Clay. Really happy."

"I am," Dream replies, watching George's hair be swept by the AC.

"If I knew all it took was a cute boy to get you out of the house, I would've set you up ages ago," she laughs.

They go back and forth, Dream still in awe of her ability to embarrass him. Even once they pull into the drop-off, he lets George linger in his seat, gently waking him with a shake. His mom showers them with tales of caution as much as goodbyes, and the pair shuffle to the terminal with their luggage dragging behind them.

"Over five hours, hm?" George murmurs. The flight attendants drone on with instructions in the background, their displays of oxygen mask protocols going mostly ignored.

"You can nap through it," Dream says, resting his chin on his head- a gesture he's come to love giving.

"Eh, I won't be able to fall asleep. Keep me company, so I don't die of boredom?" George asks, meeting his eyes.

The idiot bats his eyelashes. He has his waiting face on. Dream leans down like it's second nature.

He hadn't noticed just how quickly this became familiar. Dream peppers him with kisses idly throughout the day- kisses him hello, kisses him goodbye, when he smiles, when he laughs. Now, George whips out the puppy eyes and he's already giving in.

"God, I've created a monster," Dream says, giving a soft peck anyway.

They describe it as "love language," he believes. Knowing so inherently what and how to share, just how to tell someone every way they make you feel. He supposes he speaks in gestures. Dream's love language is showering him with gifts, surprising him with food, all the little things he communicates with his actions. Even now, something so mundane as knowing which soothing pattern to rub into the delicate skin of George's hand- it's valuable to him. Dream can say more this way than he ever could in words.

Initially, he feared they would run out of things to talk about while spending all their time together. It's quite the opposite, in fact; Dream doesn't know if they've scratched the surface. Even on this several-hour-long flight, George being drowsy, they hardly stop talking the entire way.

In the baggage claim, Dream is partway through an excited rant about an Oklahoma Sooners game

when they see him. Standing there with a dumb grin on his face, Sapnap approaches with open arms.

Wasting no time, the pair walk up and hug him from both sides, and it's like three puzzle pieces finally clicking into place.

"I think I owe you a good twenty hugs over," Dream says.

"And a few pinky promises," Sapnap chuckles in response.

"God, the gang's all here, huh?" George asks.

"Not all here. Karl and Alex are waiting at the place," Sapnap says.

George squints for a moment, gears audibly turning in his head. He lights up and his mouth goes wide.

"What?" Dream laughs.

"No way. *No way*. You're- are you shorter than me?" he asks.

Sapnap immediately spins him around, standing back to back. He places a hand on both their heads and promptly pushes George away.

"No. *No*, that is complete bullshit, you are NOT taller than me," he says.

"Really? Because it kind of looks like he is," Dream teases.

"No, I'm wearing flip flops, he has sneakers--"

"You're cheer captain and I'm on the bleachers, yeah, yeah. Life will be so much easier if you just accept this," George says, placing a hand on Sapnap's shoulder.

"We are the same height at the very *least*," he grumbles.

"Hey, let's save it til we get to the house. Then we can collectively laugh at Quackity's height," Dream offers.

When they pile into the uber, George is singled out to sit in the middle.

"Maybe you're taller but at least I'm not built like a straw," Sapnap says, looking pleased at his grumpy expression. He purposefully shoves George against Dream as the car passes over a bump, earning him a punch on the shoulder.

If the driver is fed up with their bullshit, no one blames him.

The drive through LA is paved with wide overpasses knit together, lined by skyscrapers and rows of swaying palms. Dream doesn't think even Miami sees such little sky, but god, is it breathtaking. When they reach the house, carved into the side of the foothills overlooking downtown, he takes a few minutes to admire the view. Never did he think he'd be here, with his favorite dumbasses in the world, on the opposite end of the country.

Speaking of dumbasses, the moment the car pulls away, the front door swings open with a slam.

"Who are you and what are you doing in my front lawn?" an obnoxious, fake british accent calls out. As Quackity steps out, Karl runs at full speed to bear hug them.

“Wow, who invited them?” Karl says.

“Yeah, this neighborhood’s really going to shit,” Quackity replies, stepping down to join in. They all stand for a few seconds in the driveway, distant traffic a soundtrack over the scenery.

After taking in the sight, everyone files into the house, and it’s more impressive on the inside than it looks on the outside. Dream makes a mental note to consider marble countertops. A skylight or two back home wouldn’t hurt either.

The image of George clothed only in stripes of amber light lying on the couch comes to mind. He puts away that thought to revisit later.

Settling into the living room, it’s just as it was with George- almost picking up where their last call left off, but now, seeing real-time, in-person reactions to every word.

“I think you have more freckles than Dream does,” Karl teases as he gives George a once over.

“I mean, he has more on his shoulders,” George replies, evidently without thinking.

“What, did he give you a tour or something?” Quackity jokes.

It was humid that night, skin almost sticking to the sheets in domestic silence. George asked, and Dream was delighted to show him. The way his fingers traced his arm is a memory that will never leave him, delicate and intimate without a word ever needing to be spoken.

George makes a blank face.

"So," Dream interjects, "LA."

Everyone seems content to move on.

"Yep. Best-worst city in the country," Quackity muses.

"Where are we headed first, boys? The beach? Museum? Movie theater?" Karl asks.

"Actually, I'm headed to sleep," George says.

"Neither of us got much sleep on the plane. It alright if we pass out for a while?"

"Sure thang. Follow me," Sappnap says. The pair are led down the hall to two bedrooms.

Two bedrooms.

Dream frowns, and Sappnap gestures apologetically.

"You guys aren't really out to anyone, so I wanted to... y'know. Give you the option. In hindsight, I probably put you in a more awkward situation."

“No, thank you, seriously. We’re still on the down-low for now. And don’t worry about it, we can sleep apart when we need to,” Dream says.

“You sure about that?” Sappnap chuckles, eyeing where their hands are brushing against each other instinctively.

“I’d rather keep this between us. It’s still... new,” George admits.

"Of course, of course. I've got your backs. But just know, every last one of us is here no matter what, especially the two idiots that flew several hours to come see you. Alright?" Sapnap says.

"Yeah. We know. When we're ready we'll let you all bully us to high hell about it. Promise," Dream says.

They share a nod of understanding. George wastes no time throwing himself into bed to bundle under the covers. He glances up expectantly, and though Dream is happy to haul his luggage in from the car, he rolls his eyes at how spoiled the man is.

"Hey, do you guys mind if we head out for a while? We need to load up on snacks and stuff," Quackity asks as Dream passes through the living room.

"Oh, sure."

"Aight, see you later. Get your beauty rest," Sapnap teases.

Dream waits patiently for the front door to close, contentedly flopping into bed with George. The luggage is left mostly in a pile on the floor.

"Don't think I didn't see what you put in the bedside drawer," George remarks slyly.

"As if you're complaining. Better safe than unprepared," Dream says. They draw close together, pulling the covers up over themselves.

"Did they leave," George mumbles into Dream's shoulder.

"Yeah. I'll set an alarm so we aren't... like this when they come back," Dream replies. He reaches over George and fumbles to unlock his phone. One hour should be a long enough nap, better safe than sorry. He'll indulge in this while he can.

George pulls against his chest like a magnet, and Dream's arms fall around his waist on autopilot, the weight of his body on his hand feeling like home.

"This is insane," George says after a while, barely awake. He breathes against Dream's collar, nosing into him. "I never thought I would be here. With you."

Dream runs fingers through his hair lovingly.

"I think, at the beginning, I imagined it a lot. There were a lot of days, when I felt lost, that I thought we might even stop being friends." It comes out more despondent than he intended. George presses a thumb to his mouth.

"Shh. Stop thinking so hard. We're here, and I'm sleepy," he says.

Sleep. That sounds like a wonderful idea.

When Dream was alone, he would've been glad to start falling within hours of closing his eyes. It always felt as if there was something else he could be doing, something more important. With George snuggling under his chin, he's able to drift so easily.

He was so used to nightmares or grand adventures, plagued by either extreme. Now, Dream has found himself a pleasant in between. His brain fogs over and meanders down a lazy river of comforting memories. Everything is moving, alive, and he's impossibly at ease. There's nothing tangible, only more colors than he could name or imagine in waking. Dream sees a pool of

something otherworldly and lets himself sink, overtaken by a profound sense of wonder. And, in every corner, is some piece of George, embedded in the very fibers of what makes him himself.

A loud creak pierces the rippling dreamland and pulls him back up. Dream's eyes tear open, squinting against the harsh light, and the silhouette in front of it.

Karl is practically a deer caught in the headlights.

"Hi?" Dream asks, still rendered mostly unconscious.

"Oh. Uh. Ruh roh raggy," Karl manages to say before closing the door.

It takes the hastily descending footsteps for it to register what happened. He pulls away from George to check his phone. The inactive alarm glares back at him condescendingly. That would explain it. He groans and makes a mental note to just use a timer next time.

"Hey, wake up," Dream gently rocks George.

"Already?" George yawns once his eyes flutter open.

"Actually, more than already. Set my alarm wrong. I'm only awake because Karl came in," Dream replies.

"Karl... what?" George asks.

"His first response was 'ruh roh raggy,'" Dream says.

George is seemingly unbothered, ignoring him and turning over to close his eyes again.

"Oh no, you're getting up, blanket hog."

George is tickled until he falls off the bed, Dream yelling a soft "geronimo" as he follows suit. The tangle of blankets and laughter on the bedroom floor feels childlike in the best possible way.

Eventually, the pair make themselves presentable and head out to the living room. Karl and Quackity both look to the floor, trying to make it apparent they weren't watching the hallway.

"So what's on the agenda for tonight?" Dream asks.

"Stay-at-home party. Keepin' it low-key so we can tackle stuff tomorrow," Sapnap replies.

"Sounds like a plan," Dream says, making towards the bag of snacks they brought home.

He and Karl fight over a bag of rainbow sour belts, Quackity claiming ownership of the tamarind candies because "it's my birthright, assholes." No one competes with George for the chocolate-covered raisins, which he's not complaining about, and Sapnap keeps his party-sized bags of chips tucked under his arm. He thankfully had the foresight to bring an HDMI cable, so a bag of popcorn is set to microwave and a pirated movie is queued up.

When they talk through the movie, loud enough for the entire city to hear, no one minds. As they lay in a pile of tangled limbs, occasionally leaning on or roughhousing with each other, there isn't a single complaint. He enjoys learning the small details, how their friendship is a living, breathing thing. Karl handles scary movies better than Quackity, who throws a mess of popcorn on the floor at every jumpscare. Sapnap has no qualms about eating said popcorn off the floor, and Quackity's over-the-top expressions as he does so are priceless. And there's George- despite spending the past few days attached at the hip, he still finds new facets of him to treasure.

When the energy trails off, Sapnap pulls out a chessboard and invites him to a match. Dream accepts, eager for every opportunity to show off. George translates the game to Karl and Quackity, all the while in quiet admiration. The weight of wooden pieces is something he hasn't felt under his fingers in years.

Before the sun has sunk beneath the horizon, he's already punctuating his sentences with yawns which spread through the group like wildfire. Once their words become few and far between, the boys retire to their rooms. Dream decides it best to sleep separately from George, as dismal it is being alone in a bed. He assures himself it's just for this vacation until it settles in that after this, George is going back. And then, Dream decides he'll be damned if he spends their last few days together sleeping alone.

Turning the doorknob slowly so as not to make a sound, he climbs into bed with George, who doesn't offer any questions. He simply shifts to make room and presses into him, as if to ask "what took you so long?"

That night, Dream is greeted to visions of abstract colors and geometric shapes.

The next morning, Sapnap tries and fails to get them out of bed before noon.

"C'mon, we're losing daylight," he complains. Dream is still in his pajamas, taking his sweet time to pour himself a glass of water.

"Says the guy who wakes up at ass o'clock every day," Dream teases. Sapnap flips him off. "So, are we filming the manhunt skit?"

"Yep."

"And after?"

Quackity throws himself onto the couch.

"LA nightlife, baby!" he calls out.

"Karaoke. Obviously karaoke," Karl adds.

"Yeah. All that," Sapnap chuckles.

"If we can get George out of bed, that is," Dream says.

Their bedroom door swings open and a very unenthused-looking George pads out into the living room in an oversized T-shirt. He complains, looking more cute than intimidating, and the urge to kiss the sleepy look off his face right then and there is unbearable.

"Well, get your asses dressed so we can roll out," Sapnap says. He gathers toy weapons they got the night before into a backpack, most likely to avoid the shame of their driver seeing grown men holding Minecraft swords.

Wearing a cloth mask, sunglasses, and a hoodie isn't ideal while they're on their way to the park- if you can reduce it to just a park. The roving botanical garden has intricate paths, ponds, and arches of trees paving the way. He's glad the owners were as polite as they were, because everything here looks far too destructible for a group of young adults to be running and screaming.

The boys set up in a patch of grass, as far from the delicate flowers as they can be. While they set up cameras, Dream dons his smile mask.

“Yeah, run in from the right, maybe?” Karl says, observing the shot.

“We can do the intro in front of the orchard, and have the camera circle Dream like a cheesy action movie sequence,” Quackity adds.

“Ooh, he can like, unsheathe his sword like an anime character,” Sapnap says.

They brainstorm, Dream watching George lay back in the grass and toy with the frame of his goggles. After enough lazing and creative chatter, they ready themselves and Karl films the short introduction, as cheesy as they can make it. They watch it back, and Sapnap pauses on a frame of him posing dramatically.

“Why do you always stand like the emoji,” he laughs.

“Naw, but why he kinda...” Karl jokes.

“Shut up, man,” Quackity says.

George hums.

“He’s got a point.”

It would be easy to brush off as a joke, but Dream knows that look. They all choose to brush it off anyway.

He couldn’t have anticipated how filming something so light-hearted and silly would be in person, but now, panting from running and wheezing, he’s infinitely glad to be here. They’re giving themselves more editing work to do, pausing every few moments to break character and crack jokes, but no one minds.

Stealing moments to lay in the grass with George is worth the disapproving looks from the others while they pack up. Dream rides the high of genuine, unfiltered, good-old-fashioned dicking around from the moment they leave and through the rest of the evening at the house. After plenty of stupid photoshoots and episodes of The Office, they change into attire more fitting for a night out.

“I’m way more nervous doing this in person than over call,” Karl swallows. The dark of the karaoke room is bathed in neon, and he’s gripping the microphone with uncertainty.

“It’s just like how it always is. C’mon, High School Musical, you and me,” Sapnap says. He takes Karl’s hand and coaxes him up to the stage.

Sapnap brings out the enthusiasm in him, and by the end of the song, both of the men are belting at the top of their lungs without shame. Afterwards, Quackity insists on taking the mic and singing a rendition of “Where are the Askers” that has them all on the brink of pissing themselves. Karl, Sapnap, and Quackity rotate between songs, and Dream enjoys the show while laying back in his seat.

“So, are you doing a duet, or what?”

Dream glances up to Quackity, who’s holding out the mic.

“Sure.”

“What song are we doing, Dream?” George bats his eyelashes.

“Preferably something a little... mellow?” he chuckles awkwardly.

“Got it,” George smiles.

He leads him by the hand and queues up a song. The track comes on screen, and warmth floods Dream’s expression.

“Really?” he asks.

“I like the way you sound when you sing it,” George says.

Dream rolls his eyes, tapping his foot as the steady guitar chords invite them to the front. He starts at a whisper, but the tension eases from his shoulders when George squeezes his hand.

“Hey there Delilah, what’s it like in New York city?” he chants, their eyes meeting as he murmurs the words, “tonight you look so pretty, yes you do.”

As the temperate words grow louder, more ardent, George joins in. Dream is used to him sabotaging his own singing, purposefully making a spectacle, but now his voice carries the tender melody straight into his core and dissolves his insides until his knees wobble.

“We’ll have the life we know we would,” they sing in tandem, rising and falling as one.

Dream sheds his fear and raises to match his volume and pour out his heart onto the glossy black tile. There has to be helium in his lungs, that can be the only explanation for feeling so light he could float.

The last few lines they repeat together, inching closer with every utterance of the lyrics growing rawer, more transparent.

Oh, it’s what you do to me.

Oh, it’s what you do to me.

Oh, it’s what you do to me.

When the song tapers off, they pull back apart.

“Wow,” Sapnap says. “I guess everyone thinks they sound good in the shower.”

Dream socks him on the shoulder and hands the microphone back. He takes his seat again, still charged with aftershocks. The others do a few more songs before they’re all out of breath, but they don’t go home, and Dream is assured that the night is just beginning.

“A club? Aren’t you, like, eight,” George asks. Sapnap ignores that.

“It’s 18+. They only card you at the bar,” he replies.

“I mean, if you really want to go drinking we can just vacation in Mexico,” Quackity laughs.

“I’m not opposed to a Cancún trip down the line,” Sapnap says.

Dream goes fuzzy at the thought that this could be their new normal- plane rides and group vacations. The moment the door swings open, they're met with the heady scent of sweat of dancing and glare of strobe lights.

"God, this is... a lot," Sapnap says.

"Yep. Wanna go dance?" Quackity offers.

"It's not like we can drink, and there's not much else to do," Sapnap shrugs.

"I'll join you guys. Solidarity," Karl says. The trio drag each other out and disappear into the sea of bodies. George and Dream choose sitting at the bar over going anywhere near the roving crowd.

George asks for a drink like it's something natural, and the bartender squints at him even after he's shown him his ID. Dream bites back a wheeze.

"Pretty privilege comes with a cost, baby-face."

"Shut up, Dream. You ordering anything?"

"Erm," Dream chews his lip. "I... Actually, fuck it, why not."

He finds the most diluted, fruity drink on the menu and unabashedly sips beside the flower-print mini umbrella. George seems to have no issue downing his glass with little resistance. Dream hates to admit how intriguing he finds that.

They engage in easy conversation as the other boys' laughter is drowned out in the background. As Dream rambles about new interests- Geoguesser, sustainability of clothing production, music production- he notices George begins to gradually shift in demeanor. He speaks more loosely, his eyelids hooded a little lower as he goes from silently nodding to commenting on everything he says.

After a while, he cuts Dream off in the middle of an excited rant about a song he's been looping to ask-

"Are we dating?" George asks, nonchalant. With that, realization strikes Dream.

"Shit, did I never ask you out?" Dream chuckles, feeling a little more loose himself.

"You were planning to?" George asks again.

"Yeah, it just kinda, slipped away."

"You can finger me, but not ask me out? Great job, Dream." he chuckles.

The following silence is deafening. Having been a joke, they should have laughed, they *should* have done anything other than stare intently at each other's lips.

"So... boyfriends, hm?" George drawls.

Dream leans in, ensnared by his gaze and pushed forward by a phantom pull in his chest.

"I like 'boyfriends.'"

He grabs George's shirt by the handful and crashes into him like a breaking tide. With a swipe of his tongue, he catches the warm burn of alcohol and revels in the taste. The club music is swirling

in his head and spilling out onto the floor, the pair drifting closer to cloud nine until the hundreds of overlapping voices are nothing but whitenoise.

It's sloppy, sapping the breath from his lungs and killing the voice in his throat. The feverish, needy give-and-take has him both pliant under George and fighting to pull him apart. The ecstasy of the hungry lapping into his mouth forces Dream to slow them both down before it gets out of hand.

"Woah, woah, easy. We probably shouldn't do this here," Dream whispers. Even in the dark, every face obscured by the ambient lighting and eyes far too focused on themselves, he feels exposed. Judging by the hand inching its way up his shirt, George wants to take this as far as he does.

"Go tell them we're leaving. I'll call an Uber," he says.

Solid plan. Dream makes his way to where the trio are dancing like no one's watching and tugs on Sapnap's shirt to catch his attention. None of them bat an eye when he yells over the noise that they're leaving, but Sapnap gives him a cheeky grin.

The car ride is an excruciating one. Dream is bouncing his leg impatiently, pulling at his seatbelt and letting it go over again. With every glance to the side, his gaze goes hazy and deep. All George does is watch, raking his nails lightly across the seat. His eyes are showering him with paragraphs of just what he wants to do to him, where, and how long. When the car stops outside the house, Dream swallows.

The moment the door shuts, George jumps him, hooking a leg around Dream's waist and haphazardly rolling his hips into him. Pushed against the wall, George grabs handfuls of Dream's hair like he's holding on for dear life, welcoming the onslaught of sloppy, open-mouthed kisses. They stumble to Dream's room and giggle like teenagers, nearly tripping twice until they land on the bed.

Their hazy, lusty eyes agree on an unspoken pact, and hands fly to undo zippers in a frenzy. Dream wastes no time unbuttoning George's pants while the latter aimlessly paws at the bedside table. He hands Dream the bottle from the drawer, evoking a pleased smile- George wants to watch *him*.

As intoxicating as the rasping of denim is, they both shudder at the feeling of skin against exposed skin. After the first night, they'd fooled around plenty, from the couch, to the bed, to the hard edge of the kitchen counter, but they only went so far. Dream is feeling bold. He wants to push *farther*.

"I want you," George mumbles, hands trembling.

"Use me," Dream replies, hot against his breath. George just about cries out.

Dream points to the drawer and receives a nod of understanding, grinning at the shaky hand that passes over a small wrapper. Opening the thing with his teeth in a big show, George arches up as he rolls down the latex.

After their clothes are left in a heap, Dream situates himself lower, sitting on George's calves and drinking in his look of devotion. Leaning down, inch by inch, Dream takes George in his mouth.

Only a few laps under the head and he's breathing sharply, steadily building from half-mast. The alcohol is making the blood take longer to flow, but that only pushes him to do more.

Dream eases his way down, teasing at the slit, tracing veins and flattening his tongue across the top, taking in every movement George reacts to the most. He's desperate to challenge himself, take George down to the hilt and watch him beg, but he doesn't want this to end quickly. Dream wants to try something.

Pulling off, leaving a saliva trail and a pleading whine, he continues moving his hand in lazy strokes. Dream flips them over, holding up George's weight by the chest as he looks about ready to collapse. From beneath, Dream starts situating himself, anticipating George's reaction with bated breath.

He presses his knees together and leans his legs against George's shoulder. Guiding a hand to his mouth, Dream sucks on the other's fingers before leading them between his thighs. A knowing look washes over George.

"God," he says, still teasing at his skin.

"Go ahead. Use me," Dream replies.

George nods, sucking in his bottom lip as he squeezes his hip in anticipation. He looks at Dream with pupils blown so wide they're dark, glass mirrors. Holding his leg by the ankle, George makes no hesitation as he thrusts in between Dream's thighs, head falling back, slack-jawed.

"Fuck, it feels just like- *fuck*," George slurs.

The sound is almost obscene, Dream wrapping a hand around himself and drinking in George's desperate moans.

"Fuck, you know what always gets me?" Dream gets out between heavy breaths. "Noises. Those fucking sounds you make are enough to have me on my knees, you know that?"

George's toes curl at his sultry tone, and he speeds up in pace.

"Your voice, raw and broken, makes me come apart. Your little breathy whines almost have me begging," Dream continues, egged on by how fiercely George is chewing his lip.

At this point, George is grabbing fistfuls of bedsheets, clinging for dear life while the friction leaves heat pooling in Dream's gut strong enough to melt the skin. George's name is coiled around his tongue, leaving his throat in a husky growl.

The lines between them grow blurry, George straining to keep his eyes open and rake his gaze over Dream's body. His sharp breaths hitch in time with his movements, looking to be on the brink of falling apart.

In his state, George is chasing release, desperate to push himself over the edge. Dream, however, is determined to savour this.

He places a hand against George's chest.

"Slow down. Let me," he says.

The whine he gets in response is *melting*. It takes every ounce of his willpower to pull away.

Dream grabs George by the shoulders, flipping them over so he's seated on top, legs weighting George's own. He coats his fingers in more saliva and slips them between his inner thighs. George lays back, mesmerized as Dream sinks down, knees pushed together as much as the position allows.

"Please get on with it," he begs.

Teasingly slow, he lifts and rolls his hips until George audibly groans in frustration.

"Faster, *please*," George almost screams.

"Want it? Then do something about it," Dream drones in his ear, sucking a bruise against his collar.

George takes that as a challenge. He squeezes the sharp ridge of his hip and rams upward as Dream's head falls back gracefully. His parted lips are enough of a sight to make the ancient Greeks fall to their knees in prayer. Adonis incarnate, George loses all sense of restraint, his inhibitions left with his clothes discarded on the floor.

Eventually, he slows his pace. George sits up and flips them in one motion, until Dream is propped up on his hands and knees.

"Wait," Dream says gently.

He hands him the bottle and reaches back to guide George's hand to the small of his back. The man's eyes widen.

"Can I?" George mutters, still as considerate as ever in his deliriousness. The gentle pause before going forward has Dream's heart doing somersaults.

"Please," he utters out.

George places a pillow under their knees and Dream hears the click of uncapping. He listens, with his cheek against the bed, as he warms the liquid in his hands before tracing his thumb down, wreaking shivers up his spine.

It's foreign at first, but slow, and Dream is impatient. He presses back against George's fingers and urges him to continue. George happily obliges.

Dream takes deep inhales, willing away the discomfort of the stretch. With each finger he adds, he chews his lip a little harder.

"That's enough, please," he says, muffled against the mattress.

"If you're sure," George replies.

Dream doesn't know what he was expecting. The feeling defies the very idea of expectation.

"Fuck, holy- shit. *Fuck*."

Curses spill out faster than he can think of them, and he's only just slowly drawing inside. Once their hips are flush, George pauses to let him relax.

"Ready?" George asks after a while. He speaks with patience, but his hands are fidgeting and his legs are shaking.

"Ready."

He starts out in a slow, easy motion. Dream braces himself against the headboard, focusing on his labored breathing and the gorgeous sounds pouring from George like music.

"God, this feels, you feel-"

He gets increasingly eager, and Dream knows he's desperately trying to hold back.

Right as he moves at the right angle, in the right place, Dream doesn't want him to keep trying.

"*Holy shit*, was that-"

"Yeah," George says. Dream doesn't have to look to know he's smiling. "Good?"

"You could say that," he replies, breathless.

George, going off the volume and pitch of his steadily rising moans, is able to reach there over and over again. He builds a fast tempo, and Dream delights in the vulgarity of the bed frame slamming against the wall, neither having any regard for how loudly they're singing the other's praises.

Dream becomes fluent in the rhythms of his rocking hips and trembling thighs, acutely aware of how close they are, harmonious by every definition of the word. The harsh pace and friction have the pillows stained dark beneath him and his cheeks tear-streaked. In any other situation, he would've been embarrassed, but George runs slender fingers down his cheek and presses against his back so soothingly.

When George reaches under to wrap around him, Dream is pushed over the edge. He nearly *screams* George's name as his spine curls up and tenses. Everything that's wound up in him ebbs out, and he feels George follow suit. The snap of his hips grows frenzied before slowing to a stop.

"*Shit*," "*Fuck*," and "*God*," are spoken in concert, both following each other down as they ease off their high.

George collapses against him, and they lay there, still connected, catching their breath. Dream winces as he pulls out and crashes into the bed. His own knees give out completely, so he turns on his side to watch the blissed-out expression on George's face.

"Hi," Dream whispers.

"Hello," George replies.

Their hands, appearing enchanted, draw together so their fingers intertwine in perfect synchronicity.

Dream is content to bathe in the golden afterglow, feeling the warmth of George's flushed cheek against his chest when they pull together.

"Dream?" he asks.

“Yes?”

“I want to tell the world I love you.”

His voice wavers with uncertainty, still faintly slurred. Dream rubs in between his shoulder blades, pressing kisses to the damp hair plastered to his forehead.

“Then we’ll tell the world.”

"Is everyone here?" George asks.

"Just about. I think if any more people logged in, our wedding would be in five FPS," Dream replies.

George taps his finger repetitively, gripping his mouse a little harder than he needs to.

"I'm nervous too, don't worry," Dream says, knowing all his tells. "Oh, got a DM, they need like five minutes. Just relax, alright?"

“Alright,” George replies.

They picked a spot far away from the greater Dream SMP, by the sunflower field where they spent the summer. Most everything has been demolished and stripped for resources, but the Ferris wheel still stands, proud, just as they left it.

They fell in love here, once.

“They just never took that down, hm?” Dream says, punching in the direction of the Ferris wheel as if he read his mind.

“Yeah. Kind of glad they didn’t. Reminds me of sometime simpler,” George hums.

“Simpler? I always saw it as so... complicated,” Dream says.

“In a way, yes. But... I don’t know. It felt all giddy and new. Like we could do anything, even though we hadn’t spoken a word about how we felt,” George replies.

“I feel like I always spoke about how I felt pretty shamelessly. Even if I didn’t know it at the time. It was kind of embarrassing, honestly.”

“Not more embarrassing than the awkward, gay panic we sent each other into.”

Dream pauses. He seems to be stifling a laugh.

“You had a gay panic?” he asks. George goes red.

“You- you didn’t?!”

“Nope. I don’t know, I guess I always knew there was something there, you just happened to be the person that made me fully realize it. At the end of the day, liking men is just another thing I can win at. I’d say I won with you,” Dream chuckles.

“God, that’s- I’m not going to live this down. This is- God,” George groans.

“It’s nothing to ‘live down.’ Wear it with a badge of honor. Sexuality is wild, and pinning that shit down? That’s something to take pride in,” Dream assures him.

“Yeah, at least I know *now* . What about you? If- if you’re okay- if you’d be willing to,” George stammers.

“I... don’t know. I don’t know if I’ve seen a single word that sums up how I feel, but that might just be lack of research. If I had to sum it up, I’d say I’m attracted to energy? If that makes sense? Greatness, attitude, aura- those things all catch my eye before anything like gender.”

“So you love me for my vibes?” George says, cheekily.

“You’re such an idiot,” Dream replies, and George feels more love in his voice than he’s ever heard.

“You know what is embarrassing, though? When I was on call, with Sapnap one day, all stressed over our relationship I recorded a little voice clip, something to listen to when everything worked out in the end. I’ve been too afraid to play it. I’m kind of afraid to get comfortable and embrace a happy ending, I guess,” George admits.

“I think I’ve got you beat. When we were fighting, I wrote you a *letter*. I assume I was supposed to give it to you at some point, but it’s... real bad,” Dream says.

“I show you mine and you show me yours?”

“Only if you go first.”

It doesn’t take much scrolling for George to find the file. He sends it as best he can with his thumb so unsteady. The moment it sends, he hits play, and they both listen quietly.

"There's streetlights with moths around them. There's a petrol station down over that way. I hear my neighbor's TV and my dog snoring. It's... it's peaceful."

He sounds so foreign, even being only months ago.

"Stuck. Confused. But... hopeful."

He wishes he could tell himself it worked out in the end. He wishes he could let himself know just how worth it it’ll be.

“God, I want to give past you the biggest hug,” Dream says. “I hope you know you weren’t alone then. I was down just as bad.”

A screenshot of a document pops up below the voice recording.

George’s eyes skim the words, widening as he reads more and more of Dream opening himself raw in his writing. It tugs at his chest, feeling like he’s been shown a piece of him that no one else knows or understands.

“Wow,” George whispers. “Do you mean all of that?”

“More than ever,” Dream replies.

“I thought I was the only one who was scared for so long. This is... thank you.”

Before he can finish that thought, they both get pinged in the SMP discord. It's go-time.

"Well, I guess we're going to toss ourselves into the 'vast unknown of what we could be' right now," George chuckles. "Well. You ready?"

"You know it, baby."

They both enter the voice call to a dozen voices cheering, greeting them with excitement. One by one they share their congratulations and lead the pair to a decorated stage. Sarnap comes out dressed in a tux behind a lectern, and Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo toss flowers along the aisle- Tommy more reluctantly than the others. The seats are packed with friendly faces, and the sun is inching its way towards the ocean.

"Do you guys have your vows?" Sarnap asks.

"Uh... I don't have anything prepared," Dream says.

"Me neither," George adds.

"Who cares. Speak from the heart, I'm sure you'll come up with something," Sarnap says.

The couple look to each other and nod. There's probably a million things George should be nervous about- how anyone could check Name MC and see the suspicious amount of SMP members in formalwear, or how they're displaying their affections for almost twenty of their friends, or the fact that this silly joke ceremony is all occurring over *Minecraft*, but that all seems distant now.

They decided not to record the event and value the memory over anything else. It feels strange, after having so much of their relationship's journey captured on camera, but George prefers it this way. It's something that only lasts in this moment, with the people they love.

"God, okay, I'll go first," he stammers. "You all know me, I'm not exactly the figurehead for being affectionate and emotional. So, you know I'm being honest when I say I am without words for how Dream makes me feel. I always felt so lucky to be friends with him, to know someone so beyond what I deserve."

George lets it flow, and all the pent-up adoration he's built up over the past half a year is finally let out where everyone can hear him.

"Before the millions of subscribers, before the success and everything, I knew Dream would achieve something amazing, just through the ability of his mind and his heart. I'm honored he brought me with him. I'm honored he sees something in me, being as brilliant, funny, and talented as he is. I've never known myself like I know myself with him."

Dream audibly snuffles. He wipes his nose and chuckles so damn *fondly*.

"God this, it's really been a strange, strange journey. If you told me at the beginning of the year, fresh off hitting one million, that I would be here? Fuck, I might call you crazy or something. But I wouldn't give it up for the world," Dream says. He takes a deep breath. "When you're young you dream about having an amazing, fairytale life, but as you grow up, you believe it less and less. Once you get hurt enough times, fail enough times, you give up altogether. George, you loved me into believing love is possible. For that, I owe you the world. And I'd offer you the world in my palm, if all you did was asked."

Oh. Well. George can understand the whole crying thing now. He reminds himself they're playing

a silly block game, but the tears come flooding anyway. He looks to his better half and thinks about everything it took to get to this moment. If he's honest- he would do it over and over again.

"Do you, Clay Dream Block-Wastaken take this man to be your virtually wedded husband?" Sapnap laughs.

"I do."

"Mr. Georgeee HD Gogmeister, do you take this man to be your virtually wedded husband?"

"I do."

"Damn straight. You guys can kiss or whatever," Sapnap says.

The pair crouch and approach each other, the crowd yelling from their seats as they meet. It's stupid, and cheesy, and everything he wants it to be. Dream looks up at him, the lopsided smile seeming to ask- asking if he knows.

George knows how much he loves him. God, does he know.

Chapter End Notes

It's finally finished. Final author's note is quite long, so here it is if you'd like to read it:

[Author's Note](#)

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